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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

REPORT OF THE THIRTIETH SESSION
25-28 June 2018

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
OFFICIAL RECORDS: 2018

SUPPLEMENT No. 21

United Nations

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Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), pursuant to its resolutions 158 (XIV) of 5 April 1987 on holding its sessions on a biennial basis and 196 (XVII) of 31 May 1994 on their frequency, held its thirtieth session in Beirut from 25 to 28 June 2018.

Session meetings were held in two segments, one for senior officials and the other for ministers. At the senior officials segment, consideration was given to requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the thirtieth session of the Commission. The segment also considered global and regional developments of priority to the Arab region, notably the findings of the survey of economic and social developments in the Arab region 2017-2018, megatrends in the transport sector, and support for the Palestinian people.

The Commission also reviewed its work and that of its subsidiary bodies, especially the outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, the links between information and communications technology processes and sustainable development, a proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA, and activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre. With regard to management issues, the Commission reviewed programme performance in the biennium 2016-2017; technical cooperation and regional advisory services, the financial status of the Commission, and the proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019. The Commission also took note of a presentation on the new vision for reform in the United Nations.

At the ministerial level, three round-table discussions were held on technology for sustainable development in the Arab region, which was the main theme of the thirtieth session. The round tables focused on integrating technology and innovation into national development planning; the role of technology in tackling the challenges of the Arab region; and frontier technologies: opportunities, challenges and the way forward.

The session concluded with the adoption of the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and a set of resolutions for submission to the Economic and Social Council for its attention and action. The present report sets out the resolutions adopted by the Commission, and a summary of the main points raised in the discussions under each agenda item.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) held its thirtieth session pursuant to its resolutions 158 (XIV) of 5 April 1987 on holding its sessions on a biennial basis, and 196 (XVII) of 31 May 1994 on their frequency.

2. The present report sets out the proceedings of the thirtieth session of the Commission, which was held in Beirut from 25 to 28 June 2018, and consisted of seven plenary meetings: four senior officials meetings and three ministerial meetings, during which three round-table discussions were conducted. Two closed meetings of the drafting committee were also held to consider the recommendations.

I. ISSUES FOR ATTENTION AND ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

3. At its seventh plenary meeting held on 28 June 2018, the Commission adopted the following resolutions for submission to the Economic and Social Council for its attention and action.

Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region

Technology and Innovation for Decent Employment and Empowered Youth

1. We, the representatives of member States of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), assembled in Beirut from 25 to 28 June 2018 at the thirtieth session of the Commission, reaffirm our commitment to placing technology and innovation at the heart of the inclusive and sustainable development process in the Arab region.

2. We recall General assembly resolution 72/167 of 19 December 2017 on the right to development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),[1] the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,[2] the Paris Agreement on climate change,[3] and the Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society,[4] all of which have technology and innovation as key components.

3. We refer to the adoption of the Arab Strategy for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation,[5] which emphasizes the importance of concerted efforts on technology and innovation in line with regional development needs. We refer also to the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[6] which was adopted by ESCWA member States at the twenty-ninth session of the Commission and called for the development of a regional action plan for the achievement of aspects related to science, technology and innovation in the Arab region.

4. We state our firm belief that technology and innovation are key enablers of the 2030 Agenda, and can provide creative solutions to achieve people-centred, sustainable and inclusive development. We are convinced of the need to place technology and innovation as pillars of transformation in national development plans, to maximize benefits and minimize threats from technological disruption, in full consideration of local resources, capacities and constraints.

5. We are encouraged by the potential for technology and innovation to contribute to sustainable development in advancing the structural transformation of our economies, enhancing productivity and creating decent jobs in the Arab region. Current and emerging technologies in areas as diverse as agricultural and industrial productivity, transport, education, medicine, clean energy, energy efficiency, potable water, sanitation, clean air and climate change offer great promise in finding solutions to many of the challenges facing our countries. More of these solutions should be indigenous to our region: we must develop our own capacity to innovate, and adapt and protect technological breakthroughs.

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[1] General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

[2] General Assembly resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015.

[3] Adopted on 12 December 2015 at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris. Available at https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

[4] General Assembly resolution 70/125 of 16 December 2015.

[5] Adopted on 29 March 2017 by the Arab Summit, held in the Dead Sea, Jordan. Available at http://www.alecso.org/en/2016-04-06-07-56-24.html.

[6] E/ESCWA/29/12/Report, p. 5, para. 14.

6. We are, however, distressed by the suffering resulting from crises throughout the Arab region, their impact on human development and tragic facts, including the unprecedented numbers of forcibly displaced and aid-dependent populations, which have reached alarming levels and are currently standing at nearly 30 million and 60 million people, respectively.[7] In this regard, we stress the need for the return of the displaced to their countries of origin, which would contribute to reconstruction processes and to alleviating burdens on them and on host countries.

7. We note that the region registers the world's highest youth and female unemployment rates, standing at 27 and 40 per cent respectively,[8] while the female labour force participation rate remains the world's lowest, at 21 per cent.[9]

8. We also note that least developed countries (LDCs) and some middle-income countries in our region suffer from high rates of multidimensional poverty: 40 per cent of households are multidimensionally poor,[10] with education deprivation as a central challenge. We are deeply concerned by the increasing size of the informal sector and share of vulnerable employment, the mismatch between skills provided by education and those required by the market, the pervasively low level of regional labour productivity, and the low investment in research and development in the region.

9. We note with alarm the increased weather volatility and frequency of extreme weather events in our region, which is suffering from extreme heat spells that lead to natural disasters, flash floods, sand and dust storms and desertification. In addition, over two thirds of Arab countries are facing increased water scarcity and the negative impacts of sea level rise.

10. We recognize that technology can play a pivotal role in addressing the root causes of poverty, enhancing the accessibility and quality of services to reach the poor, promoting the accumulation of human capital, helping to transform the economy and creating decent job opportunities. We recognize also that frontier technologies, such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, cloud computing and blockchain technology, may both contribute to, and detract from, progress on employment, in particular youth employment. An enabling environment based on effective regulation, including regulation of the Internet as a public good, combined with adequate investment in human capital and research and development, will help to contain threats while reaping maximal benefits.

11. We recognize further that integrated statistics, geospatial information, earth observations and other sources of data, combined with modern data processing and big data analytics, have become essential for countries to efficiently implement, monitor and evaluate sustainable development policies.

12. We stress that gender equality must be mainstreamed in national policies while considering the potential of technology in combatting violence against women and fostering the political and economic empowerment of women. Gender equality is indeed not only a right for women; it is a necessity that brings benefits to the economy and society.

13. We condemn Israeli practices and policies that restrict the access of Palestinians to technology, impeding service delivery and hindering development, including restrictions on technology imports, such as

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[7] ESCWA calculations based on end-2016 data for from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

[8] Data from the United Nations Development Programme, *Arab Human Development Report 2016: Youth and the Prospects for Human Development in a Changing Reality* (New York, 2016).

[9] Data from the World Bank, available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS (accessed on 1 June 2018).

[10] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/2.

medical and communications equipment, to Gaza. We also condemn discriminatory Israeli policies that impede access to technology in the occupied Syrian Golan.

14. We affirm that unilateral economic measures increase people's suffering. Thus, we call for the accelerated lifting of the unilateral embargo by the United States of America on the Sudan, which prevents the society from benefiting from human knowledge and the technology required for delivering health services, creating jobs for youth and realizing inclusive development.

15. We stress that the restrictions on access to technology imposed on some Arab countries impede development in those countries. In this regard, we affirm the necessity of ceasing the application of unilateral coercive measures on the Syrian Arab Republic.

Enabling technological ecosystems

16. We will seek to put in place national and regional policies to support the development of technological ecosystems that are adapted to the socioeconomic, environmental and political context of Arab countries and able to attract private sector investment and foster innovation, particularly encouraging the development of local content and entrepreneurship. We will develop legislative and fiscal policy proposals to promote investment in technology and innovation, and encourage entrepreneurs and investors to explore new technologies via targeted incentives.

17. We resolve to closely examine social protection and taxation systems, adopt agile policies to embrace and direct new technologies, and help employees and employers to adapt to new demands while ensuring that gains are broadly shared.

18. We will develop regional strategies that stimulate technology transfer, and leverage synergies between the industry and research institutions to address gaps in industrial productivity and enhance competitiveness while reducing technological dependencies.

Dynamic educational systems for decent employment opportunities

19. We will facilitate the integration of graduates from universities, vocational institutes and schools into the labour market through the adaptation of educational outcomes to future employment requirements. We will maximize the availability, accessibility and affordability of quality education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and enhance digital skills at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. We will improve and expand vocational training to provide youth with skills for today and life-long learning opportunities that fulfil their personal aspirations while meeting the needs of the labour market.

20. We will seek to bridge the persistent gender gap in STEM education throughout the region, increasing women's participation in the digital economy, and applying a gender lens when developing and implementing policies that harness technology and innovation.

Technology-driven social inclusion

21. We will promote assistive technology to guarantee full inclusion of persons with disabilities, in line with agreed international standards. We will ensure that the benefits of technology and innovation reach vulnerable groups, remote communities and those living in cities destroyed by conflict, thus fostering social justice.

22. We will build strong partnerships with civil society in pioneering and promoting technology towards participatory policymaking. We will promote the use of technology to improve the participation of youth in public policymaking, fostering bottom-up innovation for greater inclusiveness.

Supportive governance

23. We will leverage technology to adopt smart government practices, enhance public transparency and accountability, improve access to information and provide open data.

24. We will strive to increase efficiency in the delivery of public services, including e-government, and to adopt new analysis technologies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of policymaking and implementation, including poverty reduction, social protection and social services, in reaching the most vulnerable.

25. We will increase the accessibility of technological tools and networks to facilitate interaction between stakeholders and stimulate the conversation around the SDGs, support implementation, monitor progress and improve accountability. We will use new technologies such as geographic information systems, earth observations, big data and statistics in support of regional and national development strategies. Efforts will be made to harness these sources of information in a high-quality and consistent manner and use them to complement official statistics in informing policy formulation, implementation and follow up.

Environmental sustainability

26. We will identify, anchor and assist technological advancement in emerging sectors where research and commercialization are making important strides, and ensure the sustainability, affordability and suitability of technological solutions that address natural resources limitations.

27. We will facilitate the use and transfer of technology associated with natural resources management where a potential exists for efficiency improvement, in particular water and energy efficiency leading to food security and environmental sustainability, adopting a nexus approach. We will also seek to share, disseminate and transfer appropriate, reliable and affordable technologies.

28. We will strive to ensure that all member States fully benefit from financing solutions available for climate-related activities, submitting proposals for financing by global climate funds, seeking technical assistance from global and regional networks for the implementation of our nationally determined contributions and translating them into visions and action plans.

Conflict mitigation and disaster risk reduction

29. We will leverage technology in accessing, assessing, analysing and disseminating information in the context of climate change action, disaster risk reduction, conflict prevention and response, including tools for humanitarian assistance, early warning systems, in order to strengthen recovery, reconciliation and rehabilitation. We will enhance the use of new technologies to mitigate the impact of natural and man-made crises.

30. We will develop or update national cybersecurity strategies, cyberlegislation frameworks and data protection regulations, to cope with the escalating risks of cyberwar, cyberterrorism and cybercrime while defending fundamental rights and freedoms.

31. We will ensure that documentation, analysis and dissemination technologies are fully utilized in raising awareness about Israeli violations of international law in occupied territories and the repercussions of occupation on development.

Financing technology for sustainable development

32. We will mobilize and scale up national and regional financing and investment for technology and innovation, especially in LDCs, in support of the SDGs, and utilize all financial facilities available for Arab LDCs.

33. We will aim to increase public investment in research and development while incentivizing the private sector to finance technology and innovation, particularly in areas with strong social, environmental and economic development impact.

34. We call upon industrialized countries to honour their commitments in terms of financing and transferring appropriate technologies for sustainable development on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, and in particular commitments made in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, to support the implementation of the SDGs.

We commend the ESCWA secretariat's steadfast promotion of cooperation and regional integration, and request that it further its activities in this regard, with an emphasis on technology and innovation. We also ask that the secretariat continue to provide high quality advice on technology and innovation for sustainable development, with focus on the following activities:

(a) Foster coherent regional responses to rapidly evolving technological advancements, supporting norms and standard-setting and fostering an enabling ecosystem, anchored in the 2030 Agenda, with a focus on the most vulnerable segments of society;

(b) Provide evidence-based policy advice to promote structural transformation through technology to enhance productivity and sustainability, thereby addressing the root causes of multidimensional poverty, promoting economic and social integration, creating decent employment, and research the impact of technology and innovation on sectoral employment generation;

(c) Raise awareness on technologies for the inclusion of youth, older persons and persons with disabilities in areas including education, employment and access to public services, and develop informative material on the role of technology in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the Arab region;

(d) Share experiences and best practices in technology transfer and adaptation through North-South and South-South cooperation, building member States' capacity to access financial resources;

(e) Coordinate national and regional policymaking on Internet governance, promote the Arab regional perspective in the international arena and provide support in researching and defining negotiation positions on contentious Internet governance issues;

(f) Support in filling the legislative and regulation vacuum around unregulated frontier technology issues through policy-oriented research;

(g) Reinforce multi-stakeholder partnerships on technology and innovation, including convening the Arab High-level Forum on the World Summit on the Information Society and the Arab Internet Governance Forum;

(h) Support member States in adopting emerging green technologies to address the main regional socioeconomic and environmental challenges;

(i) Support networking and create a participatory platform for cooperation among Arab States on frontier technology issues.

From Beirut, we reaffirm our commitment to work together on harnessing the power of technology and innovation to build a more peaceful, prosperous and just future for all in the Arab region.

7th plenary meeting
28 June 2018

329 (XXX) Establishment of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies in the Arab Region

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling the Paris Agreement on Climate Change,[1] the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[2] and the considerable related commitments to be met by Arab States in implementation and follow-up processes, with climate change raising further challenges to sustainable development,

Recalling also its resolution 305 (XXVII) of 10 May 2012 on sustainable development in the region and follow-up and implementation of the decisions of the Rio+20 Conference, in which it requested the secretariat to continue to coordinate and cooperate with Arab Governments, United Nations organizations, and the League of Arab States and its specialized committees to take measures to achieve sustainable development, and in particular to provide support to the energy, water and environmental sectors on climate change issues,

Recalling further its resolution 281 (XXV) of 29 May 2008 on addressing climate change issues in the Arab region, in which it requested the secretariat to prepare an assessment of the vulnerability to climate change of economic and social development in the region, and to take the necessary measures to increase awareness of climate change in respect of adjusting to and alleviating its impact,

Commending the successful implementation of the first phase of the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and the issuance of the first Arab Climate Change Assessment Report in September 2017,[3] which highlights that the Arab region will experience serious temperature rises during this century, which will in turn increase the vulnerability of water-reliant sectors, especially in the Arab least developed countries,

Welcoming the training activities implemented by the secretariat to build the capacity of Arab States in benefitting from the Regional Knowledge Hub[4] to develop climate change policies, plans and projects, including the ten regional training workshops on capacity development for Arab climate change negotiators,

Taking note of the appreciation expressed by the Arab Ministerial Water Council, the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment and the Arab Council of Ministers Responsible for Meteorology and Climate with regard to RICCAR and the workshops supporting Arab climate change negotiators,

Considering the need of Arab States for the provision of relevant scientific information, means of implementation, appropriate technology and sufficient funding to be prepared for climate change negotiations and to report on their nationally determined contributions in the context of climate change adaptation and mitigation,

Aware that institutional mechanisms should be developed in the Arab region, similar to those developed in other regions, to help in building the capacity of Arab States and their institutions to integrate climate-related issues into national and regional development policies and programmes,

Recalling the recommendation made by the Executive Committee of ESCWA at its fourth meeting, held on 13 and 14 December 2017, to approve the proposal to establish an Arab centre for climate change

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[1] Adopted on 12 December 2015 at the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Available at https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement.

[2] General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

[3] E/ESCWA/SDPD/2017/RICCAR/Report.

[4] http://www.riccar.org/.

policies focused on building Arab capacity and preparing studies, especially in the field of climate change negotiations,[5]

1. *Welcomes* the establishment, through extrabudgetary funds, of the Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies, to support member States through the following:

(a) Providing technical assistance and advisory services to Arab States;

(b) Building the capacity of Arab States and regional stakeholders to strengthen institutional frameworks and develop programmes and policies;

(c) Supporting regional platforms to harmonize positions and build regional consensus;

(d) Promoting comprehensive responses to climate-related challenges affecting water, energy and food security;

(e) Providing access to knowledge products and to regional data and information using the Regional Knowledge Hub;

2. *Recommends* the expansion of capacity-building efforts at various technical levels through holding regional and national workshops on models, means and financial instruments to support climate change negotiations, assessment processes, and access to financing and technology transfer, and providing regular updates on climate change developments to negotiators and other actors in the field of climate change adaptation and mitigation, while emphasizing the principle of coordination in implementation with the concerned organizations;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to take the necessary measures, in coordination with the League of Arab States, to ensure effective implementation of the activities pertaining to the second RICCAR phase, in cooperation with the relevant international, regional and national institutions; to ensure that the multidimensional aspects of climate change are taken into account in work on water, energy, food security and sustainable development; to support the Arab Climate Outlook Forum; and to strengthen partnerships with the concerned organizations;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to submit a progress report on the implementation of this resolution to the Commission at its thirty-first session.

7th plenary meeting
28 June 2018

330 (XXX) Support for the Palestinian people

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Referring to General Assembly resolutions 67/19 of 29 November 2012 on the status of Palestine in the United Nations, 70/141 of 17 December 2015 on the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, ES-10/19 of 21 December 2017 on the status of Jerusalem, and ES-10/20 of 13 June 2018 on the protection of Palestinian civilians,

Referring also to Security Council resolution 2334 of 23 December 2016, which condemned all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, and reiterated the Council's demand that Israel immediately

[5] E/ESCWA/2017/EC.4/9/Report.

and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in that regard,

Referring further to Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/30 of 25 July 2017 on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan,

Recalling its resolutions 307 (XXVII) of 10 May 2012, 316 (XXVIII) of 18 September 2014 and 326 (XXIX) of 15 December 2016, in which it reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the need to support their efforts and those of their institutions towards attaining those rights in accordance with United Nations resolutions, and called for intensifying efforts to raise awareness on the rights of the Palestinian people and the violations of those rights, to calculate the cumulative impact of the Israeli occupation and its practices on the Palestinian people, and to establish a specialized unit within the ESCWA secretariat on issues concerning Palestine and its people,

Noting the report presented by the secretariat to the thirtieth ESCWA session under the agenda item on "Support for the Palestinian people: impact of the Israeli occupation and practices",[1]

Referring to the notes by the United Nations Secretary-General prepared by ESCWA in 2017 and 2018 on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan,[2] which highlighted the continuing deterioration in their economic and social conditions resulting from the persistence of Israeli policies and practices that violate international law,

1. *Asserts* the unity of the Palestinian people, wherever they may be, and their common plight under Israeli policies and practices that seek to fragment them;

2. *Condemns in the strongest terms* continued Israeli violations of the United Nations Charter, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and of United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, in particular forced displacement, illegal decisions to annex occupied East Jerusalem, de facto annexation of settlements in the West Bank, the continued illegal and inhuman blockade of the Gaza Strip; the use of excessive force against unarmed civilians; the destruction of homes and facilities; and continued arbitrary arrests, settlement construction and land confiscation, and reaffirms the need to hold Israel accountable for those violations;

3. *Condemns also* the recognition by the Government of the United States of America, and by other States, of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the relocation of their embassies thereto, as this is contrary to Security Council resolutions and diminishes prospects for attaining just and comprehensive peace, and affirms that Jerusalem will remain the capital of the State of Palestine;

4. *Warns* of the implications of politicizing humanitarian and development assistance extended to Palestinian institutions and financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which compromises the ability of those institutions to provide services to the Palestinian people, including refugees;

5. *Commends* the efforts of the ESCWA secretariat in support of the Palestinian people and their quest to attain their rights and advance development in the occupied Palestinian territory in spite of the occupation;

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[1] E/ESCWA/30/5.

[2] A/72/90-E/2017/71 and A/73/87-E/2018/69.

6. *Welcomes* the establishment of the Palestine Unit under the Emerging and Conflict-related Issues Division of the ESCWA secretariat, whose functions include supporting Palestinian institutions in their development efforts, monitoring and documenting the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation and the violations by the occupying Power of the rights of the Palestinian people and of international law, and assessing the long-term cumulative impact of the occupation and its practices, using a comprehensive scientific approach;

7. *Invites* member States to undertake the following:

(a) Intensify communication with the general secretariat of the League of Arab States, ESCWA and other concerned United Nations agencies on issues relating to supporting the Palestinian people in their quest for the full attainment of their rights, and their efforts to mitigate the impact of the Israeli occupation on development and to stop Israeli violations of international law, in particular of the United Nations Charter, relevant resolutions emanating from United Nations bodies and relevant international treaties;

(b) Provide support to the ESCWA secretariat in its efforts to assess the cumulative, multilayered and long-term impact of the Israeli occupation and practices on the Palestinian people;

(c) Increase their support to UNRWA, in order to enable it to continue delivering assistance and basic services to refugees until their right to return is realized;

8. *Requests* the ESCWA secretariat to continue supporting the Palestinian people and their institutions through the following:

(a) Provide normative and technical needs-based support to Palestinian institutions, including research and studies, for the implementation of the National Policy Agenda 2017-2022[3] and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;[4]

(b) Support Palestinian institutions in collecting and analysing data to develop policies and programmes aimed at mitigating the impact of the occupation and related practices;

(c) Develop its work on assessing the cumulative long-term impact and cost of the Israeli occupation and practices based on a scientific methodology, secure the necessary resources and mobilize partners to complete that process in coordination and consultation with concerned entities;

(d) Produce detailed economic and social studies, based on quantitative and qualitative research, which help the Palestinian people to overcome the economic and social repercussions of Israeli policies and practices;

(e) Monitor, analyse and document the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation and Israeli violations of the rights of the Palestinian people and of international law, and present periodic reports to the Commission on that subject;

9. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to follow up on the implementation of this resolution and to present a progress report in that regard to the thirty-first session of the Commission.

7th plenary meeting
28 June 2018

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[3] State of Palestine, *National Policy Agenda 2017-2022: Putting Citizens First* (December 2016). Available at http://www.palestinecabinet.gov.ps/WebSite/Upload/Documents/GOVPLAN/NPA%20English.pdf.

[4] General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

331 (XXX) Comprehensive approaches to technical cooperation in response to member States' emerging needs

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling resolution 328 (XXIX) of 15 December 2016 on technical cooperation to meet the needs and priorities of member States, which recognized the importance of technical cooperation programmes and called for the revitalization of the Technical Cooperation Network as an essential coordination body for such programmes,

Recalling also General Assembly resolutions 67/226 of 21 December 2012, 71/243 of 21 December 2016 and 72/279 of 31 May 2018, adopted in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in which it encouraged resident coordinators and United Nations country teams to draw more upon the normative support work and policy expertise that exists within the regional commissions, recognized the contribution of the regional commissions and of subregional, regional and interregional cooperation in addressing development challenges, and reaffirmed the role and functions of the United Nations development system at the regional level, including the regional economic commissions and the regional teams of the United Nations development system, and underlined the need to continue to make them fit for purpose in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

Aware of the emerging challenges in the Arab region, particularly the difficulties associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1]

Underlining that there is scope for better long-term planning of ESCWA technical cooperation activities to ensure optimal deployment of resources and accountability for implementation, while maintaining flexibility in the delivery of demand-driven activities,

1. *Commends* the efforts of the secretariat in building on its comparative advantages and linking its technical cooperation work with its other core functions of research, analysis and consensus-building to support policy formulation, and notes with appreciation its additional efforts in catering to the increasing needs of member States;

2. *Expresses its appreciation* for the ongoing collaboration with United Nations country teams on the development of technical cooperation activities by the secretariat and member States according to their priorities, and for the efforts exerted by the secretariat to provide support to United Nations development entities operating in the Arab region by virtue of its thought leadership position;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to leverage its coordination role among United Nations regional development entities in the establishment of mechanisms to provide guidance for technical cooperation activities along with member States and to enhance their impact.

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332 (XXX) Developing the work of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Referring to its resolutions 313 (XXVII) of 10 May 2012 on the frequency of sessions of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development in the Countries of the ESCWA region, and 214 (XIX) of 7 May 1997 on the establishment of that Committee,

[1] General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

Recalling the Doha Declaration on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by member States at their twenty-ninth session,[1] in which they requested that focus be placed on financing for development and that a forum for discussing the issue be created,

Taking into consideration the recommendations of the twelfth[2] and thirteenth[3] sessions of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development on splitting the Committee into two committees, which would each hold biennial sessions,

Realizing the importance of increased participation of member States in prioritizing, planning and developing ESCWA programmes on financing for development,

Aware of the need to enhance coordination and complementarity between ESCWA and Arab regional organizations in their work on financing for development policies, in order to respond to member States' needs and build their capacity to finance national development plans,

Recognizing the importance of the role of ESCWA in tackling trade policy issues to support Arab States on the path towards regional integration and sustainable development,

Guided by action taken by other United Nations regional commissions to develop the work of their subsidiary bodies to better respond to the priorities of their member States,

1. Approves the splitting of the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development into two committees denominated "Committee on Financing for Development in ESCWA member States" and "Committee on Trade Policies in ESCWA member States", which would each hold biennial sessions, without any additional financial implications;

2. Decides that the Committee on Financing for Development shall undertake the following:

(a) Discussing priorities under the programme of work and mid-term action plans of ESCWA in the field of financing for development;

(b) Following up on progress in financing for development policies in member States and making recommendations in that regard;

(c) Monitoring developments in regional and international forums, conferences and processes with regard to financing for development, and coordinating regional efforts towards the implementation of related resolutions and recommendations emanating from such platforms;

(d) Supporting cooperation between the ESCWA secretariat and specialized ministerial councils of the League of Arab States, and organizations and unions formed under its umbrella, and with other specialized regional organizations, to build capacity and harmonize policies and strategies aimed at leveraging funds to finance development; and supporting communication efforts, partnerships and the harmonization of positions in the international arena;

3. *Decides* that the Committee on Trade Policies shall undertake the following:

(a) Discussing priorities under the programme of work and mid-term action plans of ESCWA in the field of trade policies;

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[1] E/ESCWA/29/12/Report.

[2] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.2/9/Report.

[3] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/11/Report.

(b) Following up on progress in trade policies in member States and making recommendations in that regard;

(c) Monitoring developments in regional and international forums, conferences and processes with regard to trade policies, and coordinating regional efforts towards the implementation of related resolutions and recommendations emanating from such platforms;

(d) Supporting cooperation between the ESCWA secretariat and specialized ministerial councils of the League of Arab States, and organizations and unions formed under its umbrella, and with other specialized regional organizations, to build capacity and harmonize policies and strategies to develop trade policies; and supporting communication efforts, partnerships and the harmonization of positions in the international arena;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to present a report to the Commission on its thirty-first session on the implementation of this resolution.

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333 (XXX) Adoption of the proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Recalling its resolution 322 (EC.2) of 16 December 2015 on the adoption of the strategy and plan of action on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1]

Recalling also the recommendation made by the ESCWA Executive Committee at its third meeting,[2] held in Rabat on 6 and 7 May 2017, on ensuring that ESCWA programmes and activities in the region cover youth issues and empowerment,

Recalling further the results achieved in the implementation of the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017,[3]

Convinced by the justifications presented by the secretariat in support of the amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019,[4] including giving the secretariat sufficient flexibility to respond to the requests of member States to integrate the 2030 Agenda fully into its programme of work and increase focus on youth,

1. *Welcomes* the efforts of the secretariat to align its activities with the 2030 Agenda in response to emerging regional needs and challenges;

2. *Adopts* the proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019, taking comments made by member States into account;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to follow up on the implementation of the programme of work and include therein the activities required to address challenges that may emerge in the Arab region.

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[1] General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015.

[2] E/ESCWA/2017/EC.3/8/Report.

[3] E/ESCWA/30/13.

[4] E/ESCWA/30/16.

334 (XXX) Adoption of the reports of the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia,

Affirming the important role of its subsidiary bodies in developing, coordinating and following up on its programme of work in their respective competences, so as to secure optimum benefits for member States,

Recognizing the importance of implementing the recommendations of the subsidiary bodies to enable it to undertake its duties in the competences falling within their remit,

Having considered the recommendations set out in the reports of the subsidiary bodies on their sessions held in the period between the fourth meeting of the Executive Committee (13-14 December 2017) and its thirtieth session (25-28 June 2018), namely the report on the eighth session of the Committee on Women,[1] the report on the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development,[2] the report of the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics,[3] the report on the eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (liberalization of foreign trade);[4] and the report on the twelfth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (focus on finance),[5]

1. Adopts the recommendations set out in the above-mentioned reports of the subsidiary bodies and requests the secretariat to follow up on their implementation;

2. Invites member States to put in place the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of the recommendations set out in those reports.

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II. SESSION THEME: TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARAB REGION

4. Technology for sustainable development in the Arab region was the main theme of the thirtieth ESCWA session and was discussed during the ministerial segment. The theme was adopted by the Executive Committee at its fourth meeting given the key role of technology in sustainable development, especially in creating decent employment opportunities and empowering young people. The rapid development of technology has positive long-term effects linked to all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which cannot be overlooked in the Arab region, particularly given the economic, social and environmental challenges that it faces. The session's main theme was discussed in detail at three round-table discussions on the basis of a study on the topic (E/ESCWA/30/17) and a summary containing a series of points to guide discussions (E/ESCWA/30/17/CRP.1).

A. INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION INTO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (Agenda item 21)

5. The Arab region is going through difficult times, during which development planning should not be overlooked. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the integration of

[1] E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/IG.1/7/Report.

[2] E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/6/Report.

[3] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/9/Report.

[4] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/11/Report.

[5] E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.2/9/Report.

its Goals in national development planning, keeping pace with rapid technological developments has become an implementation requirement associated with both opportunities and risks.

6. ESCWA held a ministerial round-table discussion on efforts to integrate technology and innovation in national development plans. Ms. Gisele Khoury, a Lebanese journalist, moderated the discussion among representatives of countries with disparate economic, social and environmental situations and experts in development planning, technology and capacity-building.

7. Mr. Khaled Mahdi, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development of Kuwait, presented his country's five-year development plan to achieve Vision 2025, which included policies on the knowledge economy aimed at employing knowledge products in the economic cycle. He said that the knowledge economy required policies on innovation and its concepts, and an enabling environment to apply those concepts based on three factors, namely human capital, with education and basic skill-building in line with labour market demands; structural capital including a supportive environment, related legislation and a common language between the public and private sectors; and network capital, i.e. networks established with neighbouring countries to exchange knowledge, which was the main commodity in the knowledge economy.

8. Mr. Mohamed Saeed al-Saadi, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation of Yemen, addressed national development planning in the context of conflict. He said that since 2011, Yemen had faced difficulties that prevented it from implementing its three- and five-year development plans, despite the country's promising human potential that was being invested outside its borders. The war had spread ignorance and obfuscated knowledge, and had damaged the sources and components of the economy. Yemen was currently focusing on humanitarian issues instead of development priorities and devoting all its attention on ending the conflict.

9. Mr. Lahcen Daoudi, Minister Delegate to the Head of Government for General Affairs and Governance of Morocco, said that one of his country's major successes was opening the economy to the world through free trade agreements, which provided the incentive to develop technologies locally. For example, Morocco currently produced 450,000 cars annually, and that number was expected to rise to 650,000 by 2019. Major airlines were also investing in the country. He said that the main challenge facing Morocco was brain drain because of the lack of large laboratories in the country and across the region to embrace and develop innovations. Without political will, Arab countries could not accelerate technological development in the region.

10. Mr. Imad Abdul-Ghani Al Sabouni, Head of the Planning and International Cooperation Commission of the Syrian Arab Republic, spoke about the five-year development plans that used to be adopted in the county prior to the war, but that could not be maintained during it. There was an independent national policy on science, technology and innovation that had continued to be developed during the war and had been finalized in late 2017, following a series of reviews to adapt it to the situation in the country. He said that it was necessary to link technology to reconstruction and development in line with priorities in specific sectors, and to request universities, research centres and the private sector to respond to those priorities.

11. Mr. Talal bin Suliman al-Rahbi, Deputy Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning of Oman, reviewed his country's tireless efforts in the field of technology. He said that the experience of Oman in the field of technology was promising and ambitious. It was the first country to develop a long-term vision in 1995, namely Vision 2025. He mentioned the Digital Oman Strategy that focused on 15 sectors, including information and communications technology (ICT), stating that successful planning depended on accurate operational programmes, sufficient budgets, training activities and follow-up procedures. He stressed that the private sector should be the major partner in developing plans, noting that it was taking the lead in a big number of partnerships because of its efficiency and effectiveness, and its ability to inject funds to implement various projects.

12. Participants agreed that progress in employing technology as a tool for achieving sustainable development and in developing technology and innovation was impeded by a lack of investment in research

and development, weak domestic and regional markets, and the absence of a free, supportive and enabling environment for building strong human capital and encouraging private sector participation. In response to a question on Arab countries' contribution to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, at least through localization if not through production, participants said that playing a role in that technological revolution might be easier than in previous ones. The necessary tools should nevertheless be made available to build human capital conducive to innovation, through education, training, developing critical and analytical thinking, and providing incubators for producing knowledge and transforming it into commodities.

B. Role of technology in tackling the challenges of the Arab region (Agenda item 21)

13. The world is racing to keep pace with unprecedented developments as a result of rapid technological progress known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with both positive and negative outcomes. Those developments affect all areas of science and technology, notably medicine, space exploration, agriculture, industry, social media and communications. The Arab region is at a crossroads between bowing under the pressure of various challenges or standing in solidarity and working to benefit from the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the service of the Arab society and all its groups, especially women, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, refugees and migrant workers. The call to employ technology in achieving sustainable development echoes the United Nations call in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind.

14. In that context, ESCWA held a round-table discussion on the role of technology in tackling the challenges faced by the Arab region. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Said Ghorayeb, a Lebanese journalist. He began by highlighting the major changes witnessed by societies because of rapid technological developments in the twentieth century, which made life more complicated. He focused on challenges facing Arab countries, some of which were suffering from wars and conflicts, while others had resolved them but were attempting to overcome their repercussions, and others still had managed to maintain a certain level of stability and security. He stressed the importance of disseminating technology as a tool to benefit everyone without exception.

15. Ms. Inaya Ezzeddine, Minister of State for Administrative Reform of Lebanon, discussed the lack of proportionality between the rapid pace of technology and progress in societies' cultural values. She stressed the importance of developing public policies to tackle various social issues directly related to development, and of effecting fundamental cultural changes for the benefit of young people and women. She said that technology was an enabling tool that should be complemented by social, cultural and religious solutions, and by curriculums focused on transforming data into knowledge and on educating all segments of society. She highlighted the role of Governments in formulating policies to ensure that Arab countries could produce knowledge and not only consume it.

16. Mr. Taoufic Rajhi, Minister of Major Reforms of Tunisia, discussed the importance of producing technology by exploiting expertise in the Arab region. He considered several challenges impeding the region's development efforts, including youth unemployment, weak technology transfer, the absence of legal frameworks, and the lack of mechanisms to sufficiently prepare and support young people to establish enterprises capable of growth. Other challenges included barriers that discouraged venture capitalism. He stressed the State's role in disseminating technology, achieving equality in access and enabling it especially in remote areas.

17. Mr. Mohammed Shyaa Al Sudani, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Iraq and Head of the Social Protection Authority, said that the new economy contributed to developing knowledge on the one hand, and to increasing unemployment and exacerbating poverty on the other. He underscored the importance of the human element in achieving development and of proposing reforms to empower young people, including launching a social contract that ensured equal opportunities; improving education, health and employment services; and developing strategies to tackle issues of concern to young people and benefit from their capacity. He also stressed the need to adopt long-term strategies to reduce poverty, enhance good governance, and involve the private sector in development.

18. Mr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, founder and Chairman of the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization, stressed the need to move towards knowledge societies. The world was witnessing a knowledge revolution characterized by the emergence of artificial intelligence and the Internet of things, resulting in fundamental changes in lifestyles. He differentiated between the information flooding the Internet and knowledge produced through ICT, which could be used to achieve equality and to resolve budget deficits and rising unemployment. He highlighted the importance of designing curriculums to prepare inventors able to keep pace with the sweeping knowledge revolution, rather than merely educated individuals, for entry in the labour market. He highlighted the importance of public-private partnerships in transforming Arab societies into knowledge-producing societies, and of Governments' role in developing telecommunication infrastructure and preparing an enabling environment for creativity and innovation.

19. Mr. Saed Al Koni, Chief of Staff at the Office of the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine, discussed the situation in his country that was suffering under an occupation impeding all development opportunities. He said that sustainable development could not be achieved solely through technology when arduous conditions obstructed the most basic elements of daily life. Keeping pace with developments in the region required interconnected and integrated policies in all fields, enabling a shift from knowledge consumption to production and creating an intellectual space to employ technological progress in achieving sustainable development.

20. Mr. Moeen Hamzeh, Secretary-General of the National Council for Scientific Research of Lebanon, discussed how technology facilitated daily life and provided solutions to various problems in sectors such as public health and the environment, stressing the need to reconcile between cultural and social traditions and technological developments. He added that knowledge production cemented partnerships in technology production, highlighting Governments' role in supporting and disseminating the latter, and protecting intellectual property rights. An integrated process involving economists, sociologists and environmental scientists was needed to produce technology that could benefit all sectors.

C. Frontier technologies: opportunities, challenges and the way forward (Agenda item 21)

21. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is reshaping the world through the emergence of frontier technologies, such as artificial intelligence, three-dimensional printing, nanotechnology and biotechnology. The first two round-table discussions revealed the important role of technology in communication, connectivity, planning, productivity, prosperity and well-being. Economic and social prosperity relies on adapting technology and on guaranteeing that it benefits everyone without exception. The third round-table discussion focused on Arab countries' priorities that govern policy and regulation. It aimed to envision key interventions at the national, regional and international levels to deal with technology issues.

22. Ms. Sabine Oueiss, a journalist and economic reporter, moderated the discussion. She said that in a rapidly developing globalized world, it was impossible to ignore the impact of artificial intelligence, which was incorporated into daily life, on economic performance and social life. Progress was no longer an option but a necessity, and failing to embrace it was suicide for enterprises, societies and individuals. She added that in a region where some countries were striving to keep pace with the digital revolution while others were witnessing conflict and war, development was facing many obstacles but technology could play a key role in overcoming them. The discussion focused on the readiness of Arab States; the legislations and regulations in place to enable the use of technology for sustainable development; and success stories. Participants also tackled the opportunities, challenges and systems linked to technology in view of national priorities, notably creating job opportunities, especially for young people.

23. Mr. Adnan Shihabeldin, Director-General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, said that it was impossible to predict the future, but it was necessary to take stock of the current situation so as to design a flexible road map that could be amended every few years. He added that the world was entering a new era signalling a qualitative leap for mankind, the details of which were unknown. Artificial intelligence

heightened human beings' intellectual and analytical capacity manyfold, with machines becoming an extension of the body. Arab countries were disparately prepared for that transformation in terms of plans and strategies. Young entrepreneurs were a prime example of Arab peoples' ability to produce technology rather than simply consume it. Governments, the private sector and civil society all had a role to play in that process. Governments should reduce centralization, develop mechanisms that incentivize and empower, and identify general frameworks to maintain oversight. They must also build the capacity of research and technology institutions to shift from their traditional roles towards innovation. He added that the private sector was working at a faster pace and was open to the world; Governments were therefore requested to support rather than thwart its efforts. Some Governments had already adopted that role, including in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, while other countries lagged behind because of political events.

24. Mr. Nish Acharya, Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship under former President Obama, said that his work in innovation and entrepreneurship had enabled him to form the following idea: modern technology was funded by enterprises that were willing to take risks. Statistics showed that for every 100 start-ups presenting projects, only 10 per cent received funding. Around 70 per cent of that share failed, with two or three succeeding financially but without creating employment opportunities or making a significant economic impact in the short term. It took 10 to 20 years for such companies to become worth billions of dollars and create many job opportunities. Consequently, long-term strategies and a broad base of emerging and pioneering enterprises were needed for technology and innovation to become engines of economic growth, rather than tools for enterprises to make quick profits. He added that major challenges for the Arab region included uncoordinated efforts and a very limited number of emerging enterprises in each country. It was necessary to provide specialized training to build skills, establish regulatory and education systems, and enact legislation that enabled incubators to succeed. Legislation and investment must keep pace with the fastest pace of development.

25. In response to a question about the role of the United Nations, alongside Governments and the private sector, in supporting countries to overcome obstacles, Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations for Strategic Coordination, said that such issues were of top priority for the Secretary-General. Alongside its many benefits, technology presented great risks. In some African countries, a large proportion of the population had no electricity, and the same applied to technology. Technology should be seen as a tool for reducing rather than exacerbating inequality. Facebook and other social media had enabled access to information that had previously been beyond reach, but had also contributed to increased inequality, conflict and incitement. It was therefore vital to recognize technology as a double-edged sword, and direct its use towards the public good. The document prepared by ESCWA for the current round-table discussion contained recommendations on how to benefit from technology and avoid its negative effects. Firstly, it was important to spread understanding of the nature of technology by educating people, leaders and societies, which required a review of curriculums. It was also necessary to enact appropriate legislation to facilitate technology integration, which had already been undertaken in many countries such as China, Kenya and Rwanda, thus resulting in a social transformation. The Arab region was able to do the same, despite disparities between countries. Some Arab States were already working on incorporating such changes in their societies, including the United Arab Emirates that had redesignated its Ministry of Cabinet Affairs in 2016 as the 'Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and the Future'. He added that the United Nations was ready to support States in handling significant changes linked to technology.

26. Mr. Hossam Zaki, Assistant Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, discussed the Saudi Vision 2030, which was an unconventional vision aimed at propelling Saudi Arabia into the globalized world; however, some obstacles remained, which could be overcome with time. He said that the League of Arab States had launched the Arab Strategy for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation, which had taken a long period to prepare, during which the world had advanced considerably. Debates about uncoordinated Arab efforts in handling the issue had both positive and negative aspects. On a positive note, work on the strategy had begun in 2006, which showed Arab States' awareness of the importance of the issue resulting in the establishment of a high committee to coordinate State strategies; the development of an implementation plan; and the identification of specialized scientific links between many Arab countries that were achieving a great

deal compared with the rest of the world. He added that the Strategy was not an alternative for State policy on science; it was rather an inclusive and comprehensive Arab vision to advance the field of technology. The question was how the Strategy could contribute to development in Arab countries. He said that the Arab region saw technology as an absolute good without acknowledging its negative aspects, which was very dangerous. For example, technology had made some professions redundant, which could have a negative impact in the Arab region where many projects are labour intensive. Care should therefore be taken, not to raise fears about technology, but instead to approach it from an integrated perspective and avoid expected challenges.

27. Mr. Mohammed Gouda, Manager of the TechSpace Incubator at Nile University, which specializes in artificial intelligence, discussed the challenges facing Arab young people. The greatest obstacle was in education and human capacity-building. Curriculums were not advanced from a theoretical and scientific perspective, and the labour force was not qualified in many fields let alone in technology. Funding was also difficult to secure. Government strategies and funds were launched, but the market was not yet ready for new ideas thus complicating financing. Of every 10 ideas, maybe one would succeed. The problem with legislation, or the lack thereof, should not be overlooked with regard to some technology companies that were not recognized under the law, such as artificial intelligence companies, thus resulting in them being registered under a different category of companies. He added that weak competitiveness was directly linked to prevailing stereotypes: Germany embodied mechanical engineering, India led in programming, the United States of America was a development pioneer, but the Arab region was a technology consumer. It was vital to accept failure in Arab culture, so as to encourage young people to take risks, since every success must live through some sort of failure.

28. Mr. Elie Nasr, founder of Foo in Lebanon and entrepreneur, said that challenges faced by young people in Lebanon were no different than those in other countries but were exacerbated by poor infrastructure with power, water and Internet interruptions. The education system was underdeveloped and technical universities lacked expertise, with few universities helping students to enter the labour market. He added that the major challenge was brain drain, with talents attracted by large companies abroad. In today's globalized world, it was possible to live in one country and work for a company based in another, but that situation did not benefit Arab young people. However, he stressed that he had faith in the region's future and in the ability of Arab young people to improve the region.

29. In the ensuing discussion, Mr. Acharya said that, with the emergence of cryptocurrencies and major changes in the banking and business sectors, Arab Governments needed to diversify the economy and involve the private sector in order to overcome the related challenged. Innovation alone was insufficient to devise solutions; it was necessary to prepare society, conduct specialized research and develop related financing policies. Proposed solutions included Governments focusing on a narrow issue that would benefit everyone for a long period. Mr. Zaki suggested developing common financing mechanisms to resolve disparities in funding capacity between countries. Regarding the Arab Strategy for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation, he said that Arab States could not agree on establishing a joint fund to finance scientific research because of a current lack of common will. Each country was working at its own capacity; however, average expenditure on scientific research as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) was barely a tenth of the average expenditure in developed countries. Consequently, government spending should increase, with a focus on priorities.

30. Also in the ensuing discussion, the successes of several countries were presented. Egypt had established incubators for technology entrepreneurs, provided significant funding to emerging companies, and developed strategies to provide technical and financial support to the private sector. It had also held training sessions for decision makers in the banking and government sectors to clarify new concepts and standardize language. In Lebanon, the Central Bank was preparing for cryptocurrencies. The Oman Technology Fund was closely collaborating with entrepreneurs, challenging the culture of rejection of failure and creating an enabling environment for innovative ideas. The representative of Oman presented a proposal to establish oases or islands that provided an integrated environment bringing together universities, venture capital and research centres to support young people's success.

31. In conclusion, participants agreed on the importance of changing the prevailing culture towards acceptance of risk and failure, increasing government funding for scientific research, planning ahead, using technology to create employment opportunities, supporting start-ups and empowering young people, developing infrastructure, and improving curriculums, especially vocational training to meet the needs of emerging companies. They confirmed the importance of knowledge accumulation and integration in the field of technology and of involving all social groups, especially women, in technology production and localization. They noted the Secretary-General's initiative to establish an innovation unit in all specialized departments at the United Nations to develop strategies and support young people's pioneering efforts.

D. On the sidelines of the session

32. On the sidelines of the thirtieth session, ESCWA organized a seminar on climate change in the Arab region, which included a presentation by the representative of the secretariat on the role of technological tools in mitigating the impact of climate change under the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR). The Director of the Water Department at the Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands gave a presentation on the status of the water sector in the Arab region and developments therein.

33. In a significant step in the partnership between development and culture, the Arab Thought Foundation launched its tenth annual report on cultural development 2017-2018 entitled "Innovation or extinction? Scientific research in the Arab world: realities, challenges and perspectives". Several ministers, high-level speakers and experts from various sectors participated in the event.

34. To emphasize the role of technology in supporting development, ESCWA organized the launch of a report entitled "Perspectives on the digital economy in the Arab region", which included a presentation by the representative of the secretariat on the concepts of the digital economy, its role in achieving the SDGs, and recommendations focusing on public policy, data collection and measurement indicators.

35. ESCWA also organized a meeting at which it launched a study entitled "Fostering open government in the Arab region", explaining what it entails in terms of transparency, accountability, collaboration, meeting citizens' needs and encouraging their participation in decision-making, while stressing the importance of building on lessons learned and of the role of technology as a tool for achieving open government.

III. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

36. At the senior officials segment, the Commission dedicated agenda items to key global and regional issues and developments that ESCWA had worked on. Participants discussed urgent topics, such as economic and social developments in the Arab region, megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region, and support for the Palestinian people under the Israeli occupation and practices.

A. Survey of economic and social developments in the Arab region 2017-2018 (Agenda item 5)

37. With reference to document E/ESCWA/EDID/2018/1/Summary, the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the Survey of economic and social developments in the Arab region 2017-2018. He began by analysing the dynamics between growth, the investment climate and the labour market across the world and their impact on the Arab region. He then discussed economic and social developments in the region, especially slowing growth caused by a decline in economic activities in oil-exporting countries. He noted that the Arab region had the highest unemployment and lowest labour force participation worldwide, with significant disparities between men and women.

38. Regarding social issues, the speaker indicated a small drop in the number of women in parliaments and noted the positive steps taken by some Arab States towards women's empowerment, such as appointing four

women to the Qatari Advisory Council and enacting a law allowing women to drive in Saudi Arabia. He added that Tunisia had the highest proportion of women in parliament, followed by the Sudan, Algeria, Iraq and Mauritania, with shares above the global average. He recalled several challenges facing the Arab region in achieving social and economic development, notably protracted armed conflict, lack of political stability and security, widespread displacement and high levels of public debt. He also highlighted available opportunities if the situation improved and economic, financial and tax reform continued.

39. In the ensuing discussion, participants stressed the importance of the report and the need to complement data presentation with proposals that could be built upon. They agreed on the importance of analysing in depth the situation presented by the report rather than adopting a descriptive approach, and of making recommendations to devise solutions as a basis for a future vision and action plan to deal with the outcomes. They also said that the report should further examine social issues, such as poverty, unemployment and labour force distribution between the public and private sectors, instead of covering only unemployment among women and young people, and tackle for example the issue of ghost workers that was prevalent in many Arab countries. They also said that the report should analyse the direct and indirect costs of conflict borne by conflict-affected countries and the whole region; reconstruction needs as a regional priority; and the impact of other economies on the Arab region's economy.

40. Emphasizing the importance of updating data and statistics based on national sources, the representative of Egypt expressed reservations about the projected GDP growth for Egypt, indicating that other organizations were more optimistic. The representative of the State of Palestine requested a revision of paragraph 19 of the report, focusing especially on information regarding construction, agriculture and industry in the Gaza Strip and stressing that such sectors had no added value in an area under blockade and occupation.

41. With regard to economic developments, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic requested support for his country in stopping the coercive economic measures imposed upon it, noting that stability in his country would have a positive impact on neighbouring countries.

42. In response, the representative of the secretariat commended the accuracy of interventions, confirming that the aim of presenting the report was stirring a discussion for its improvement. ESCWA would review and update the data as much as possible given the rapid changes in the region and the world. It was necessary to ensure integration in the proposed solutions, although it was difficult to find unified solutions for problems with disparate causes and effects between countries. The challenge was deeper than it seemed and the fragmented context required more complex and interconnected solutions. ESCWA was committed to ensuring an integrated approach to economic and social issues, as reflected in three preliminary studies conducted in Jordan, Kuwait and Tunisia on linking budgets to social services. ESCWA was also working with the International Labour Organization on developing an integrated project to resolve youth unemployment.

43. The representative of the secretariat also clarified that the survey followed a global template adopted by the General Assembly, which dictated its topic and structure. Although there was room for greater comprehensiveness and deeper analysis, the survey reported the reality on the ground to avoid duplication with other ESCWA reports specializing in economic and social issues that gave more detailed solutions. In line with a recommendation by representatives, the survey would indicate those specialized reports and refer to them when necessary to ensure integration.

44. The Commission took note of the survey's findings, and representatives confirmed the importance of linking those findings to SDG indicators so that countries could benefit from the survey to achieve progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

B. MEGATRENDS IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE ARAB REGION (Agenda item 6)

45. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/4, the representative of the secretariat made a presentation on a study under preparation on megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region. The study was based on several surveys conducted by ESCWA, which revealed weaknesses in the transport sector, especially in railways, road coverage, intraregional transport of goods, accession to international agreements, logistical performance indicators and regional integration. ESCWA was working on a project aimed at formulating a strategic vision to develop a multimodal transport system that would assist the region in achieving sustainable development.

46. The presentation covered the major engines of change in the transport sector, namely: (a) geography and environment, including the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, shipping lanes through the Arctic Ocean and the declining use of fossil fuels due to environmental concerns; (b) population and society, including rapid population growth and urbanization, and changes in consumption patterns; (c) economy and finance, including the increasing importance of emerging economies and transport's role therein, and development financing challenges; (d) regulation and governance, including international agreements on global and regional transport activities, governance openness, and user participation in service evaluation; (e) political factors and conflict that altered transport lines, and widespread concern for energy security; and (f) technology and innovation, including the use of clean energy sources and solar power, hyperloop trains and driverless cars. The representative of the secretariat stressed the importance of regional cooperation and of developing a common and integrated vision to overcome transport challenges in the Arab region.

47. In the ensuing discussion, representatives noted the importance of the ESCWA study in facilitating progress on trade exchanges, integration and development in the Arab region. They stressed the need for regional cooperation to find common innovative solutions, and enhance regional interconnectedness in the transport sector and in policies to optimize national benefits and transform them into regional benefits. They said that the document presented provided a negative outlook on the Belt and Road Initiative, although it might have some positive aspects such as reducing maritime transport shares and promoting economic activities that increased use of transport services. They also discussed the prospects of the Initiative, its contribution to increasing transport volumes and its impact on the Arab region, stating that the Initiative cast globalization in a new light.

48. Representatives considered the role of ESCWA in the transfer of global expertise to facilitate trade in the Arab region, the contribution of traditional railways between Arab countries to reducing transport costs, and the role of the regional study under preparation on the subject in planning for the future. They proposed the addition of an ICT component to the study's concept note. An assessment could be made to select the best scenario and examine implementation risks. They mentioned the solar powered car developed by the Sudan along with other initiatives to showcase Arab countries' capacity to employ ICTs in the transport sector and create employment opportunities.

49. Representatives proposed linking the model presented in the study's concept note to transport developments in Arab countries, while taking into account consumption patterns and analysing the impact of transport on production and trade, then formulating scenarios based on that model and directly linking them to SDG indicators, in addition to benefiting from other ESCWA economic models. Representatives agreed that development in any sector stemmed from political will at the national and regional levels. They saw the region as fragmented and lacking a united political will, which complicated the development of a common strategic vision on transport. They stressed the need to disseminate a development culture for the benefit of future generations, and called on ESCWA to take note of national studies on transport and build upon them when formulating the common strategy.

50. Representatives discussed another component that they said should be included in the ESCWA study, namely analysing the Arab region's comparative advantage in the transport sector, especially in maritime

transport, given that many Arab ports could be affected by the Belt and Road Initiative. They proposed focusing on three models for air, sea and road transport to analyse the current status of the transport sector, assess challenges and consider the way forward. They enquired about the efficiency of national trade and transport facilitation committees, and mentioned the work conducted by the ESCWA Committee on Transport, in the context of which studies had been made and solutions proposed to facilitate trade and transport.

51. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that comments by representatives would be taken into account when preparing the regional study. He affirmed that national committees were still part of the work programme of the Committee on Transport, and that the comparative advantage of maritime transport in the Arab region was of top priority but was currently facing a threat that could only be overcome through the involvement of Arab countries in several projects. It was also important to consider the situation of each Arab country, and their national plans and strategies on the transport sector.

52. The representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA played a key role in the sector, supporting a common vision for the region's future in line with national developments, indicating three international agreements on transport in the Arab Mashreq signed by Arab countries under the auspices of ESCWA, namely the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq, the Agreement on International Roads in the Arab Mashreq and the Memorandum of Understanding on Maritime Transport Cooperation in the Arab Mashreq. Work on the draft convention on international multimodal transport was underway under the auspices of the League of Arab States. An agreement to gradually liberalize transport between Arab countries was formulated in 2005, but had not been implemented. He underlined that the concept note presented by ESCWA was not comprehensive; it rather covered major drivers of change in the transport sector and could be used as a reference when formulating common planning strategies. A detailed evaluation of alternatives and of positive and negative effects would be conducted to identify priorities in the transport sector.

C. Support for the Palestinian people: impact of the Israeli occupation and practices (Agenda item 7)

53. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/5, the representative of the secretariat summarized an ESCWA report on the repercussions of the Israeli occupation and its practices for the Palestinian people. Pursuant to previous ESCWA resolutions, especially resolutions 316 (XXVIII) and 326 (XXIX), the secretariat was monitoring and analysing economic and social conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the repercussions of Israeli practices and policies that violated international law. The presentation covered the daily demolition of homes and facilities, land and property seizures, forced displacement, and the disproportionate use of force and oppression. It also mentioned the ongoing Israeli blockade of Gaza that had begun 11 years ago, and the damage it caused to vital economic sectors and the society, resulting in de-development and the transformation of Gaza into an unliveable place according to the United Nations Country Team in Palestine.

54. The report confirmed the need to drive Palestinian industry and rely on domestic resources to overcome restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation. It also stressed the need for further studies on agricultural trade and manufacturing to identify ways to circumvent Israeli obstacles that hampered their development.

55. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the State of Palestine thanked ESCWA and Arab States for their continued support, and welcomed the Commission's decision to establish the Palestine Unit to provide support to Palestinian institutions and build their capacity. He underscored the importance of calculating the cumulative cost of the occupation to hold Israel accountable at international forums, stressing that it was impossible to achieve sustainable development under occupation.

56. Representatives endorsed the content of the report and thanked ESCWA for its role in documenting Israeli violations, which was a vital weapon for defending human rights. They requested that future reports highlight other aspects of the Palestinian people's suffering, especially forced displacement from East Jerusalem. They stressed that Jerusalem was part of Palestine, that holy sites must be respected, and that peace

was the only way to resolve conflict in accordance with international decisions and instruments applied in all other parts of the world.

57. The representative of the secretariat noted the proposals by representatives, confirming that ESCWA was preparing studies on other aspects of the Palestinian people's plight. He said that the Commission was also conducting unprecedented research to assess de-development under occupation and to calculate the long-term cumulative cost of occupation for the Palestinian people.

IV. WORK OF THE COMMISSION AND ITS SUBSIDIARY BODIES

58. The senior officials segment reviewed the work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies in the period between the two ESCWA sessions. Discussions focused on the outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, and on the links between ICT processes and sustainable development. The Commission considered a proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA, reviewed the activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2016-2017, and discussed the implementation of the Doha Declaration and other resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-ninth session. The Commission also considered the reports of the Executive Committee and of subsidiary bodies whose meetings were held in the period between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth ESCWA sessions.

A. Outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (Agenda item 8)

59. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/6, the representative of the secretariat presented the outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by ESCWA in collaboration with the League of Arab States and other United Nations organizations operating in the Arab region. The fifth session of the Arab Forum was held in Beirut from 24 to 26 April 2018 on the theme "Natural resources, future generations and the common good". The Arab Forum was a high-level regional platform for dialogue and coordination on mechanisms to implement, follow up and review the 2030 Agenda in the Arab region.

60. The Arab Forum concluded with several key messages in five main areas, which would be submitted to the 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to be held in New York from 9 to 18 July 2018 on the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". The key messages covered the Arab region's development priorities and the importance of participation and integration in their implementation; the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda from the perspective of Arab countries; natural resources, the SDGs and future generations from an Arab perspective; regional priority issues such as economic diversification, planning for resilient, inclusive and sustainable cities, financing sustainable development, and empowering women and young people; and the need to support regional efforts to prepare for the 2019 Arab Forum.

61. In the ensuing discussion, representatives noted that the focus on financing development was insufficient since it overlooked SDG 17. They enquired about the ESCWA mechanism for following up on the key messages set out in the report, and about the benefit of establishing an Arab body for energy, water and food. They said that the framework for achieving the SDGs could not remain at the regional level, but also needed to be discussed at national forums to enhance internal dialogue between Government and national stakeholders. They proposed a participatory platform be established for countries preparing their voluntary national reviews, through which they could benefit from the experiences of countries that had already submitted their reviews.

62. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that some key messages contained in the report did not fall under the remit of ESCWA. Discussions on establishing an Arab body for energy, water and food were part of a broader initiative to operationalize the nexus between those highly interconnected key issues. The representative of the secretariat commended the proposal to establish national forums to discuss the SDGs at the local level given the development disparities between and within countries. The secretariat had received

several requests for assistance in preparing voluntary national reviews, and that it was ready to provide full support in that regard, especially to war-torn countries because they required a different approach.

63. The Commission took note of the key messages emanating from the 2018 Arab Forum. It commended the Forum's role in the exchange of regional expertise on implementing the 2030 Agenda and in providing a platform for Arab countries to thoroughly discuss the theme of the High-level Political Forum.

B. Links between information and communications technology processes and sustainable development
(Agenda item 9)

64. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/7, the representative of the secretariat clarified United Nations processes on ICT for development. Those international and regional processes had begun with the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005. Another milestone was the adoption of the outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society on 16 December 2015.

65. The processes were threefold: the WSIS process, the Internet governance process emanating from WSIS, and the science, technology and innovation process. The representative of the secretariat reviewed them from international and regional perspectives, focusing on the regional mechanisms to participate therein at the international level and on regional follow-up activities. ESCWA played a key follow-up role through several studies and initiatives, especially the "Izdihar" project on the information society and digital economy in the Arab region, and the Arab Internet Governance Forum aimed at strengthening inclusive Arab cooperation on Internet governance.

66. In the ensuing discussion, representatives confirmed that governance of the digital transformation was a necessity in the light of increasing numbers of Internet users. It did not necessarily entail restrictions on freedom but rather aimed to limit Internet misuse. It also placed information technology at the core of country concerns and linked it to the development process. They asked about the role of ESCWA in helping Arab countries to keep pace with modern technology, bridge the digital divide, and eliminate so-called modern illiteracy or the inability to keep pace with the digital revolution. They also enquired about the Commission's role in supporting Arabic digital content, linking between the above-mentioned processes and the SDGs, analysing reports and international recommendations on Government readiness and competitiveness, and monitoring global ICT trends.

67. The representative of the secretariat confirmed the continued coordination with Arab States on Internet governance issues. He said that modern illiteracy was a challenge for policymakers, noting the role of ESCWA in tackling it through reports on best global practices in that area and by monitoring global trends. He added that Arabic had become the fourth language worldwide in terms of digital content, as a result of collaboration efforts between ESCWA and the League of Arab States. With regard to linking ICT processes to the sustainable development process, he said that studies were being prepared to guide Arab States' ICT policies towards increasing economic and social productivity.

68. The Commission took note of the contents of the document, and stressed the importance of balancing between the pivotal role of the State and that of other actors in the field of Internet governance.

C. Proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA
(Agenda item 10)

69. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/8, the representative of the secretariat presented a proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA. At its fourth meeting, the

Executive Committee had endorsed a proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA, tasked with preparing studies and building the capacity of Arab States, especially in climate change negotiations. The Executive Committee had requested that the proposal be considered at the thirtieth ESCWA session. The centre would focus on preparing Arab States for climate change negotiations, support them in preparing projects to receive funding, and assist them in formulating policies and measures on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

70. The representative of the secretariat gave some background information on the proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies. The Regional Knowledge Hub would be the main platform supporting the proposed centre. The centre's overarching task would be to build the capacity of Arab States in handling all aspects of climate change and linking it to sustainable development principles and concepts. The centre's proposed functions would include providing technical support and advisory services; capacity-building by strengthening institutions and policymaking; supporting regional forums to exchange and coordinate views, build consensus and devise an integrated response to regional challenges; and ensuring access to knowledge products, data and information. The centre would play a key role in securing common ground that took into account country specificities, while avoiding overlap and duplication. She focused on the water-energy-food nexus and its links to social and economic issues, and on the centre's role in providing cross-sectoral benefits.

71. In the ensuing discussion, representatives underscored the importance of the centre in tackling climate change that was threatening the Arab region and the world, which would result in climate refugees in the near future, and in focusing on the climate dimension in accordance with the 2030 Agenda. They suggested a review of resource distribution and rationalization so that administrative costs do not come at the expense of programmes and plans. They emphasized the importance of funding the centre through extrabudgetary means; facilitating access to appropriate technologies; mobilizing national, regional and international expertise; providing capacity-building tools and integrating climate change into curriculums and training programmes, linking it to sustainable development; and organizing awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of tackling climate change.

72. The representative of Kuwait approved the establishment of the centre in principle, but expressed reservations about the proposed mechanism because the centre shared the same functions as some international and United Nations organizations. He stressed the need to ensure sustainable extrabudgetary funding and requested a review of the proposed budget. Representatives confirmed the need to clearly identify mandates and benefit from ESCWA expertise for more effective and coherent participation in international forums.

73. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that partnerships enriched efforts and broadened and unified the scope of action, not institutionally but through common methodology and concepts to link climate change to other environmental issues and to strengthen communication with partners so as to unify positions. ESCWA focused on building capacity more than financing issues, and on conducting cross-sectoral work and building on successful partnerships, because climate change was no longer simply an environmental problem; it affected politics, the economy, human settlements and water. It was therefore necessary to tackle it from an inclusive perspective and to collaborate with institutional mechanisms at the national level.

74. The secretariat took note of comments and proposals by representatives. The consensus was to move forward in establishing the centre, while acknowledging the need to clarify the issue of roles and mandates, stress a participatory implementation approach with other related international and regional institutions, submit periodic reports to the Executive Committee to follow up on the centre's activities, consider securing sustainable funding from outside the United Nations regular budget for the period following the initial six years, and further discuss the issue with member States.

D. Activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2016-2017 (Agenda item 11)

75. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/9, the representative of the secretariat presented the activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2016-2017. The presentation covered the Centre's achievements compared with its expected accomplishments, the advisory services it had provided, and the partnerships it had forged with government and academic entities in member States. It also reviewed the meetings held by the Board of Governors and its Technical Committee.

76. The representative of the secretariat discussed the main items of the Centre's workplan for 2018, including building stakeholder capacity, responding to country requests for advisory services, and supporting member States in achieving the SDGs by harnessing science and technology, holding working sessions, forging partnerships, coordinating with regional and international partners, developing knowledge products, conducting research and studies, and disseminating information.

77. In the ensuing discussion, representatives expressed their desire to broaden the Centre's scope of work to cover more member States so as to optimize benefit from its expertise in innovation and scientific research, rather than focusing on a limited number of countries. They stressed the need to accurately determine the Centre's mandate to avoid duplication of work with other ESCWA specialized divisions and centres. They enquired about the mechanism for countries to submit requests for assistance, whether they should be submitted by representatives of member States to the Centre or via official requests to ESCWA, and whether undertaking scientific studies on climate change fell under the Centre's mandate.

78. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that the Centre had provided advisory services to a large number of countries since its establishment, namely Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, the State of Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia. She confirmed the integration of work under the mandate of ESCWA, which strived to avoid overlap and duplication between the work of its divisions and that of other United Nations bodies and regional organizations. Requests for assistance could be submitted either through the Centre's Board of Governors or through a formal request to ESCWA via the official channels for technical cooperation requests. She focused on the strong practical aspects of the Centre's activities, and its ability to communicate well with the private sector and research centres, underlining its collaboration with the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan that had hosted the Centre since its establishment and that continued to assign its staff to the Centre and provide it with expertise.

E. Implementation of the Doha Declaration and other resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-ninth session (Agenda item 12)

79. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/10, the representative of the secretariat presented the measures taken to implement the Doha Declaration on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the resolutions adopted at the twenty-ninth ESCWA session, held in Doha from 13 to 15 December 2016, in its different work areas and on issues of concern to member States. The Secretary of the Commission said that ESCWA presented periodic reports on implementing the Doha Declaration at Executive Committee meetings, and that the current presentation was a continuation of those efforts. Given that the Declaration was divided into two parts, the presentation focused on the achievements of the ESCWA substantive divisions in responding to requests from member States to the secretariat as set out in the Declaration. Member States also reviewed their efforts under the relevant part of the Declaration.

80. Representatives discussed their countries' achievements and vision for the 2030 Agenda in the light of the Doha Declaration. Oman had made efforts to integrate the SDGs in its national development plans and to prepare a report on progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda. The representative of Oman commended its continued collaboration with ESCWA in capacity-building and preparing national reviews. The representative of Iraq said that the Iraqi Government had adopted the SDGs in laws and national plans and programmes,

despite security and political challenges that imposed national priorities on the country and burdened its budget. It was striving to establish an institutional structure in the Ministry of Planning to guide policies in all ministries. It had also established a national working group of directors-general from relevant ministries, and formed local committees in all governorates to localize the SDGs. Iraq had launched a government programme in 2014, strategies to tackle social issues, and a 10-year national development plan. It would shortly submit its voluntary national review and had requested support from ESCWA and the United Nations Development Programme in preparing it for presentation in 2019.

81. The State of Palestine had made strenuous efforts to implement the Doha Declaration, had developed the National Policy Agenda for 2017-2022 and was preparing its first voluntary national review for submission to the High-level Political Forum in July 2018. With regard to calculating the cost of occupation, a ministerial steering committee had been formed to provide support and coordination assistance to ESCWA and its partners. The representative of the State of Palestine enquired how ministerial declarations impacted the ESCWA programme of work and requested the secretariat to present a preliminary proposal on suggested activities for the implementation of each declaration, thus enabling evaluation over time. The representative of Jordan noted the need to benefit from expertise and consultations to enable Arab countries to achieve their goals, and mentioned that his country was one of the first to submit its national review, noting that the challenge lay in transforming commitments and strategies into reality. The Sudan had integrated the SDGs into its national strategic plan and developed a national evaluation framework.

82. Kuwait had developed a clear road map for achieving the 2030 Agenda, based on its five-year development plan 2015-2020 that identified national priorities for achieving the SDGs. It would submit its first voluntary national review in 2019. A steering committee had been established to follow up on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, comprising representatives of government bodies, the private sector and civil society and national and international observers from the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank and the Kuwaiti National Assembly and State Audit Bureau. The meeting between partners and observers resulted in a national report on progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The Yemeni Council of Ministers had tasked the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation with integrating the 2030 Agenda in its reconstruction programme. The Council of Ministers was forming a national team comprising representatives of government bodies, civil society and the private sector. Yemen had requested assistance from ESCWA in preparing a progress report on SDG implementation, pursuant to a request by the Council of Ministers. The representative of Yemen noted its continued collaboration with international partners in evaluating needs regarding policy formulation and goal implementation. A major challenge currently facing Yemen was the lack of statistical data, and their fragmentation between national apparatuses and international agencies.

83. The representative of the secretariat commended member States' achievements, in spite of the significant challenges facing the region, stating that ministerial declarations were reflected in ESCWA activities and its programme of work through an integrated approach adopted by the substantive divisions. A declaration was implemented over two years; Executive Committee meetings held every six months provided an opportunity to rectify the process and amend activities to better meet a declaration's requirements. In response to a question on statistical indicators, he said that indicators were divided into three categories: economic, social and environmental. He added that work was continuing on existing indictors of concern to the region in line with national priorities.

84. The representative of the secretariat also noted that the current session's agenda contained specific items on some resolutions adopted at the twenty-ninth session. Directors of ESCWA divisions made presentations on implementation progress. On the Palestine Unit, the representative of the secretariat said that it was being established and would be completed in the near future. The Commission took note of the information and proposals, and confirmed its continued support to member States in implementing the Doha Declaration, resolutions and the 2030 Agenda. Member States were invited to submit to the secretariat their contributions and reports on implementing their commitments under the relevant part of the Doha Declaration.

F. Reports of the Executive Committee
(Agenda item 13)

85. The Executive Committee held two meetings in the period between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth ESCWA sessions: its third meeting in Rabat on 6 and 7 May 2017 whose report was contained in document E/ESCWA/2017/EC.3/8/Report; and its fourth meeting in Beirut on 13 and 14 December 2018 whose report was contained in document E/ESCWA/2017/EC.4/9/Report. The Secretary of the Commission commended the Committee's efficiency, highlighting resolution 320 (XXVIII) on redesignating the Technical Committee as the "Executive Committee" and amending its terms of reference, which had enabled it to make immediate decisions and keep pace with developments.

86. The Commission adopted the two reports and commended the Executive Committee's role in the period between the two ESCWA sessions.

G. Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies
(Agenda item 14)

87. Under this item, the Commission considered the following reports of ESCWA subsidiary bodies that were not presented to the Executive Committee, on sessions held in the period between the twenty-ninth and thirtieth ESCWA sessions:

(a) Report of the eighth session of the Committee on Women, held in Beirut on 4 and 5 October 2017 (E/ESCWA/ECW/2017/IG.1/7/Report);

(b) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development, held in Khartoum on 17 and 18 October 2017 (E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/IG.1/6/Report);

(c) Report of the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics, held in Beirut on 20 and 21 December 2017 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.1/9/Report);

(d) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (liberalization of foreign trade), held in Beirut on 27 and 28 November 2017 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.3/11/Report);

(e) Report of the twelfth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (focus on finance), held in Beirut on 4 and 5 December 2017 (E/ESCWA/EDID/2017/IG.2/9/Report).

88. Directors of ESCWA divisions gave an overview of key measures taken in implementation of the recommendations emanating from those meetings. The Commission took note of the achievements and adopted the reports.

V. MANAGEMENT ISSUES

A. Programme performance in the biennium 2016-2017
(Agenda item 15)

89. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/13, the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on programme performance, focusing on the main outcomes of the programme of work for the biennium 2016-2017, especially adding 25 outputs under the general budget and establishing the Unit on the 2030 Agenda, as well as linking those new outputs to additional financial resources. He thanked member States for their support in securing those resources. He announced the launch of an Arabic database, which facilitated data research and had links to data from institutions such as the World Bank and across the United Nations

system. The database aimed to fill the large gap in statistical terminology faced by Arab countries, especially when submitting requests for project funding.

90. In the ensuing discussion, the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic expressed reservations about paragraph 11 of the document presented, which indicated the publication of the Strategic Policy Alternatives Framework based on input from over 1,600 Syrian stakeholders, stating that it did not reflect the Syrian Government's position. He also enquired about the platforms for development dialogue set out in paragraph 12 of that document. The representative of the Sudan thanked ESCWA for its commitment to sound Arabic in its documents. The representative of Kuwait enquired about the mechanism employed by ESCWA when requesting contributions from donors, and whether donors interfered in ESCWA decisions. Representatives said that achievements should be measured against the programme of work, and not only in numbers, and that non-numerical measurement indicators should be adopted because the quality of achievements could not be assessed by the number of activities undertaken, especially since implementation rates were high although the reality on the ground was deteriorating.

91. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that the perceptions of various Syrian stakeholders could benefit government efforts in facing challenges, but they were not binding. The platforms for development dialogue aimed to contribute to convergence of views and civil peace, since all participants shared a common concern for the future of their countries. She said that ESCWA divisions had the expertise to develop integrated projects and present them to donors in the appropriate format. Donors did not interfere in decisions but instead monitored the budget and implementation. She confirmed the need to conduct a critical review of achievements and adopt measurements that reflected the quality and impact of activities and services, inviting member States to access the programme evaluations available on the ESCWA website and comment thereon.

B. Technical cooperation and regional advisory services
(Agenda item 16)

92. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/14, the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on technical cooperation services undertaken by ESCWA during the biennium 2016-2017, including advisory services and capacity-building for member States, funded through the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation, the United Nations Development Account and extrabudgetary resources. The presentation highlighted several successful experiences and challenges under the technical cooperation framework.

93. In the ensuing discussion, representatives stressed the importance of the programme's practicality in meeting current needs, and of enhancing bilateral communication.

94. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that the technical cooperation programme was ambitious and research-based, requiring a presence on the ground. ESCWA was committed to developing an integrated vision for the programme, guided by country needs and their intersections across sectors.

C. Financial status of the Commission
(Agenda item 17)

95. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/15, the representative of the secretariat gave a presentation on the financial status of the Commission for the biennium 2016-2017, which included information on budget allocations and expenditures for programmes and activities financed through the regular budget and extrabudgetary sources. ESCWA was committed to achieving greater budgetary efficiency, pursuant to a request by the General Assembly, and was confident that member States would increase their extrabudgetary contributions.

96. Representatives asked whether the overall budget was sufficient to ensure the achievements that ESCWA had committed to, and enquired about ways to fund those commitments from outside the regular budget and member States' contributions. They expressed their concern regarding dependence on external funding, since

donors might renege on their commitments to implement projects. They noted that the budget allocated to technology, the topic of the current session, was smaller compared with that allocated to other fields.

97. In response, the representative of the secretariat said that ESCWA was working to reduce expenditure in general, but was cautious not to impact programmes and projects under implementation. It relied on donor funding only for specific projects that contributed to supporting member States, otherwise it depended on its innovation to secure alternative funding. The secretariat did receive some conditional offers, which it could refuse if they did not fulfil member States' interests. Regarding the budget allocated to technology, the speaker said that, since budgets were determined according to member States' needs and priorities, other more pressing issues had been allocated a larger budget.

D. Proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019 (Agenda item 18)

98. With reference to document E/ESCWA/30/16, the representative of the secretariat presented the proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019, pursuant to new mandates adopted by the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and to keep pace with global and regional developments. Amendments to the strategic framework entailed adding an expected accomplishment and indicators of achievement focused on implementing the 2030 Agenda. Proposed amendments to the programme of work covered the reformulation of several activities, especially regarding youth issues and empowerment and violence against women.

99. In the ensuing discussion, representatives confirmed the importance of including youth issues and empowerment in ESCWA programmes and activities, as stated in previous Executive Committee meetings. They also noted the importance of implementing ESCWA programmes flexibly to meet member States' needs and fully integrate the 2030 Agenda in their work programmes, and to focus more on youth issues. They commended the secretariat's efforts in aligning its activities with the 2030 Agenda in response to emerging regional needs and challenges. They confirmed the need to improve the measurement of the programme's impact and develop performance indicators to make it more measurable, with the possibility of adding performance indicators on civil society participation and countries' reporting capacity. The representative of Egypt requested reformulating the proposed Arabic title of the expert group meeting under subprogramme 6 on women's advancement, so that focus be shifted on achieving "equality" rather than denouncing "inequality". Representatives adopted the proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019, which were further amended to reflect member States' comments. They requested the secretariat to continue implementing the programme of work and incorporating the necessary activities to face emerging challenges in the Arab region.

100. The representative of the secretariat stressed the importance of improving the measurement of the programme's impact and of developing performance indicators. He said that the programme of work was primarily for member States and that ESCWA existed to serve them, adding that recommendations by representatives would be taken into account.

E. New vision for reform in the United Nations (Agenda item 19)

101. In his reform programme, the Secretary-General of the United Nations calls for more focus on human beings instead of bureaucracy, on the operational aspect of service delivery rather than the procedural aspect, and on effectiveness and efficiency. Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild, Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination, gave an overview of the reforms aimed at improving service delivery in the United Nations, including identifying service timescales and stages. He said that reforms focused on three areas, namely peace and security, management, and the United Nations development system; whereas initiatives focused on eight areas, namely prevention, gender equality, good internal governance, counterterrorism, human rights, a new

work ethic that took into account humanitarian considerations, peace processes and innovation. He called for a dialogue between regional bodies and for the clear identification of roles.

102. Representatives welcomed the new vision for reform. They enquired whether the work of regional coordinators would fully meet the demands of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and whether reforms would cover the Security Council. They requested further information of the impact of reforms on regional commissions, and questioned how the reforms would reduce duplication in the work of United Nations organizations.

103. In response, Mr. Hochschild said that regional coordinators would formulate the development assistance framework according to the needs of each country and in line with national development plans. He conveyed the Secretary-General's position that United Nations reform would not be complete without reforming the Security Council, and that Member States had a key role to play in that regard. Regarding regional commissions, he said that the reform would aim to avoid duplication and increase efficiency.

VI. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

104. At its closing meeting, held on 28 June 2018, the Commission adopted the Beirut Consensus on Technology for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region and the draft resolutions emanating from the senior officials segment.

105. Member States requested the Executive Secretary to thank the President of Lebanon, Mr. Michel Aoun, for his high patronage of the thirtieth ESCWA session in the Commission's host country, and for his attendance.

VII. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

106. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia held its thirtieth session in Beirut, from 25 to 28 June 2018. It convened seven plenary meetings, at which it discussed its agenda items covering issues of concern to member States.

B. CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS BY STATES MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND/OR ITS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES THAT ARE NOT MEMBERS OF ESCWA TO PARTICIPATE AS OBSERVERS IN THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (Agenda item 4)

107. Rule 63 of the ESCWA rules of procedure states that the Commission may invite any Member State of the United Nations or of a specialized agency that is not a member of the Commission to participate in its deliberations on any matter that the Commission considers to be of particular concern to that State. A State thus invited shall not have the right to vote, but may submit proposals which may be put to the vote at the request of any member of the Commission.

108. In accordance with that rule, the secretariat, at the thirtieth ESCWA session, reviewed requests by Member States and took the necessary decisions. The following United Nations organizations and agencies participated in the session: the Executive Office of the Secretary-General; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; the International Organization for Migration; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Middle East; the Regional Commissions New York Office; the United Nations Children's Fund; the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Environment Programme; the United Nations Human Settlements Programme; the United Nations Industrial Development Organization; the United Nations Population Fund; the United Nations Volunteers programme; and the World

Bank. The League of Arab States and its affiliated organizations and the Gulf Cooperation Council also participated, in addition to representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society and academia.

C. Opening of the session

109. The session was opened in two stages. The senior officials segment was opened on the morning of Monday, 25 June 2018, and the ministerial segment was opened on the morning of Wednesday, 27 June 2018. The ministerial segment was preceded by a performance by the musical band of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces and a display of member States' flags by the Scouts of Lebanon.

1. *Senior officials segment*

110. At the opening of the senior officials segment, the representative of Qatar, Chair of the previous session, Mr. Tariq al-Ansari, Director of the International Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, made a statement in which he thanked Lebanon for hosting the thirtieth ESCWA session. He commended the secretariat's efforts and thanked member States for their participation. He stressed the importance of joint action to overcome the significant challenges facing the Arab region, recalling the achievements of Qatar in building on the Doha Declaration and incorporating it into national plans to achieve inclusive development. He also underscored the importance of recommendations emanating from ESCWA sessions and Executive Committee meetings in promoting the region's role and achieving development for future generations. He lauded the achievements accomplished over the past two years, including technical and specialized workshops in various fields, which focused on implementing the 2030 Agenda and contributed to launching the first Arab Multidimensional Poverty Report, and adopting a regional workplan to support Arab statistical systems, with a special focus on financing for development. He noted the effective participation of the secretariat and member States in regional forums, and the key role of regional commissions in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

111. Ms. Khawla Mattar, Deputy Executive Secretary for Programme Support, spoke on behalf of the ESCWA secretariat, welcoming guests to the thirtieth session held at ESCWA headquarters in Beirut. She indicated the continuing challenges facing the world and the region, stressing that the Arab region was the last to witness a continuing violent occupation. Conflict in the region had resulted in massive displacement on a scale unobserved since the Second World War, which was increasing poverty, marginalization and unemployment, and affecting a large number of young people who were resorting to extremism, terrorism or treacherous journeys in search of opportunities for a decent life outside the region. The ESCWA session was an opportunity to discuss a development vision that did not neglect or marginalize any region, country or social group. The session's theme, "Technology for development in the Arab region", was the result of discussions which confirmed that technology must be considered a development tool rather than an end in itself. She expressed her hope for fruitful and candid discussions to tackle the fundamental causes of crises and avoid regression.

2. *Ministerial segment*

112. Mr. Ahmad Alhammadi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, made an opening statement, representing the country that had chaired the twenty-ninth ESCWA session. He said that the region faced many challenges, including conflict, migration, displacement and economic fluctuations that impeded the achievement of the SDGs. Those challenges required further efforts and resources, the involvement of civil society and the private sector, and greater regional and international cooperation. He noted that technology played a key role in determining competitiveness and achieving sustainable development, and could therefore be exploited to build a knowledge economy. In that context, he called for efforts to promote innovation, exchange best practices and successful development solutions, and develop appropriate monitoring mechanisms for implementation activities. He added that Qatar was committed to aligning its vision with the SDGs, contributing to achieving regional and international development, and promoting participation and innovation.

113. Mr. Taoufic Rajhi, Minister of Major Reforms of Tunisia, the country chairing the thirtieth session, made a statement in which he said that the current technological revolution could provide solutions to challenges facing the region, and could transform Arab consumer economies into productive economies that played an active role in global value chains. He added that Arab countries' capacity to achieve sustainable development was linked to their ability to develop, manage and adapt promising technologies. Tunisia was striving to establish a knowledge society and digital economy, which guaranteed individuals' right to access information and contribute to innovation. It had developed a strategic plan to advance the ICT sector and the digital economy, and enacted a law to promote emerging enterprises. He thanked ESCWA for its pioneering work in various development-related areas, calling for greater, richer and more diverse cooperation with member States. He confirmed his country's complete solidarity with the Palestinian people in the face of an occupation that denied its right to development.

114. Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, made a statement in which he mentioned the collaboration between the League of Arab States and ESCWA in various fields and priorities, stressing the importance on interconnectedness and integration in their work. He reviewed the activities that the League's secretariat would undertake to support the achievement of sustainable development, indicating that the League was currently reforming its Economic and Social Council, in whose meetings ESCWA regularly participated, so as to ensure that efforts were consistent with regional and international developments. He added that technology was a key pillar for achieving sustainable development; its selection as the session's major theme reflected Arab States' desire to localize, transfer and employ technology in the creation of employment opportunities for young people. He noted that the League had developed a proposal for an Arab science and technology network for sustainable development. He stressed the importance of securing new sources for sustainable financing, especially given changing mindsets in the financial and banking sectors.

115. Mr. Mohamed Ali Alhakim, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCWA, welcomed the session's return to Beirut, which brought with it an elite group of Arab ministers. He stressed the importance of harnessing technology and innovation to serve human development in the Arab region, and of integrating both dimensions in plans and policies. He noted that technology and innovation held great potential to ensure social justice, achieve development for all social groups, and devise successful solutions for many environmental, economic and social challenges facing Arab countries. He said that Arab young people today had bright ideas and great ambition, but suffered from a lack of decent work opportunities. Governments should support the private sector in providing job opportunities and investing in young people, given the bloated and deteriorating public sector in the Arab region. He added that women in the Arab region suffered from discrimination, confirming that the region's awakening could only occur through women's empowerment in all specialized fields and the labour market.

116. The President of Lebanon, Mr. Michel Aoun, welcomed the representatives of member States, who had come together to share their expertise so as to achieve sustainable and inclusive development for the Arab region. He noted the remarkable and outstanding efforts of ESCWA since its establishment in Beirut 44 years ago, which had worked tirelessly to improve living conditions in the region by combating hunger and poverty, promoting education, health care and gender equality, and striving to protect the rights of future generations and their stake in social development, a sound environment and natural resources. Lebanon, which was witnessing similar challenges to the rest of the region, was determined to face the accumulating crises. It relied heavily on technology in economic and social planning programmes, and was developing a road map to mobilize unused capacity and potential based on international expertise so as to transform the Lebanese economy from a rentier to a productive economy. The Lebanese Government sympathized with displaced populations, but the problem had grown beyond its capacity. However, it was determined to devise solutions, hopefully with the assistance of the international and Arab communities, to assist refugees in returning to their homes. He wished the session every success, and expressed his hope for stability, peace and prosperity in the Arab region.

D. Participants

117. The session was attended by representatives of 16 ESCWA member States. It was also attended by Algeria as an observer. Other observers included representatives of United Nations programmes, agencies and institutions; international and non-governmental organizations; other organizations; and a number of experts. The list of participants is set out in annex I to the present report.

E. Election of officers

118. Pursuant to ESCWA resolution 226 (XXI) of 11 May 2001 on the election of officers for the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies and to rule 12 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, member States shall chair the sessions of the Commission on a rotating basis, in Arabic alphabetical order. Moreover, the Commission shall, at the beginning of each session, elect from among the representatives of its members two Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur, who shall remain in office until such time as their successors shall be elected, and shall be eligible for re-election.

119. Accordingly, Tunisia chaired the thirtieth ESCWA session. The representatives of Qatar and the Syrian Arab Republic assumed the posts of Vice-Chairs, and the representative of the Sudan assumed the post of Rapporteur.

F. Agenda

120. At its first meeting, the Commission adopted the agenda as presented in document E/ESCWA/30/L.1. The adopted agenda was as follows:

A. Senior officials segment (25-26 June 2018)

1. Opening.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
4. Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the thirtieth session of the Commission.

Global and regional developments

5. Survey of economic and social developments in the Arab region 2017-2018.
6. Megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region.
7. Support for the Palestinian people: impact of the Israeli occupation and practices.

Work of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies

8. Outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development.
9. Links between information and communications technology processes and sustainable development.
10. Proposal for the establishment of an Arab centre for climate change policies at ESCWA.

11. Activities of the ESCWA Technology Centre over the period 2016-2017.

12. Implementation of the Doha Declaration and other resolutions adopted by the Commission at its twenty-ninth session.

13. Reports of the Executive Committee.

14. Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies:

    (a) Report of the eighth session of the Committee on Women;

    (b) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Social Development;

    (c) Report of the eighteenth session of the Committee on Transport and Logistics;

    (d) Report of the eleventh session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (liberalization of foreign trade);

    (e) Report of the twelfth session of the Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade, Economic Globalization and Financing for Development (focus on finance).

Management issues

15. Programme performance in the biennium 2016-2017.

16. Technical cooperation and regional advisory services.

17. Financial status of the Commission.

18. Proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019.

19. New vision for reform in the United Nations.

B. Ministerial segment (27-28 June 2018)

20. Opening.

21. Technology for sustainable development in the Arab region: round tables.

22. Date and venue of the thirty-first session of the Commission.

23. Other matters.

24. Adoption of the outcome document and resolutions emanating from the session.

25. Adoption of the report of the thirtieth session of the Commission.

121. At the same meeting, the Commission adopted the proposed organization of work for its thirtieth session, as presented in document E/ESCWA/30/L.2.

G. Date and venue of the thirty-first session
(Agenda item 22)

122. The thirty-first session of the Commission will be held in the first half of 2020. The representative of Tunisia extended an invitation to host the session in his country.

H. Other matters
(Agenda item 23)

123. No issues were raised under this item.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. ESCWA MEMBER STATES

Egypt

Mr. Saïd Mohamed Hindam
Ambassador
Assistant Minister for Regional and International Multilateral Economic Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Nazih Ali Bahaa Eddine Elnaggary
Ambassador of Egypt in Lebanon

Ms. Ghada Soliman
Third Secretary
Embassy of Egypt in Lebanon

Iraq

Mr. Mohammed Shyaa Al Sudani
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs

Mr. Maher Hamad Johan
Deputy Minister of Planning

Mr. Ali Hadi Almusawi
Deputy Ambassador and Delegate Minister
Embassy of Iraq in Lebanon

Ms. Najlaa Ali Murad
Director General of the Poverty Reduction Strategy
Ministry of Planning

Ms. Aqood Hussein Salman
Director General of the Department of Human Development
Ministry of Planning

Jordan

Mr. Ziad Ahmed Mahmoud Obeidat
Acting Secretary-General
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Mr. Nabil Masarwah
Ambassador of Jordan in Lebanon

Mr. Malek Abdel Hafiz Ahmed Albrizat
Head of the Department of Arab and Islamic Relations
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

Kuwait

Mr. Khaled Abdelsaheb Abdelamir Mahdi
Secretary-General
Supreme Council for Planning and Development

Mr. Abdulal Solomon Qina'i
Ambassador of Kuwait in Lebanon

Ms. Rabab Hussein Mirza
Responsible for Coordination and International Cooperation

Ms. Shorouq Ali AlKhalil
Senior Foreign Relations Researcher
Ministry of Finance

Ms. Dalal Albedaiwy
Political Researcher
Supreme Council for Planning and Development

Ms. Mariam Obaid Almutairi
Accountant
General Secretariat
Supreme Council for Planning and Development

Lebanon

Mr. Gebran Bassil
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

Ms. Caroline Elias Ziadeh
Ambassador
Directorate of International Organizations, Conferences and Cultural Relations
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

Ms. Alia Abbas
Deputy Minister of Economy and Trade

Lebanon (*continued*)

Ms. Reina Heloui
Diplomatic Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates

Mr. Hasan Abbas Abbas
Social Worker
Ministry of Social Affairs

Ms. Rozana Mahmoud Slim
Social Worker
Ministry of Social Affairs

Mr. Fadi Bou Ali
Ministry of Social Affairs

Mauritania

Mr. Ali Weld Ahmdo
Ambassador of Mauritania in Lebanon

Mr. Mohamed Teghre
Director of Strategy and Policy
Ministry of Economy and Finance

Morocco

Mr. Lahcen Daoudi
Minister Delegate to the Head of Government for General Affairs and Governance

Mr. M'hammed Grine
Ambassador of Morocco in Lebanon

Ms. Hanane Touzani
Director of International Cooperation
Ministry of General Affairs and Governance

Ms. Meriem Eddaou
Financial Institutions Officer
Directorate of Multilateral Cooperation and International Economic Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Mr. Abdelali Boutarbouch
Responsible for e-Government Projects
Department of Digital Economy
Ministry of Industry, Investment, Trade and Digital Economy

Ms. Khadija Benaissa
Consultant
Embassy of Morocco in Lebanon

Mr. Mohammed Ben Bouchaib
Embassy of Morocco in Lebanon

Oman

Mr. Talal bin Suliman al-Rahbi
Deputy Secretary-General
Supreme Council for Planning

Mr. Badr Ben Mohamed Almouzri
Ambassador of Oman in Lebanon

Mr. Said Rashid Said Al Qatabi
Director General of the Social Sectors
Supreme Council for Planning

Mr. Emad Ben Taleb Alajmi
Director of the Arab and International Organizations Department
Supreme Council for Planning

Mr. Mohammed Bin Saif al-Kalbani
Director of the Environmental Inspection and Control Department
Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs

Ms. Ghaliya Bint Saad Bin Salem al-Ghatrifi
Head of the Environmental Agreements Follow-up Section
Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs

Ms. Kamla Bint Homoud bin Said al-Rahbi
Team Leader of Information and Statistics, International Relations and Information
Information Technology Authority

State of Palestine

Mr. Saed Raji Ahmad Al Koni
Chief of Staff
Office of the Prime Minister

Mr. Ashraf Dabour
Ambassador of the State of Palestine in Lebanon

Mr. Mahmoud Ataya
Director General of the Policy and Reform Unit
Office of the Prime Minister

State of Palestine (*continued*)

Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim Kabaha
Head of the Administrative Affairs Unit Office of the Prime Minister

Qatar

Mr. Ahmad Ben Hasan Malalah Ahmad Alhammadi
Secretary-General
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Ali Ben Hamed Moubarak Al Jahweel Al Marri
Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador
Embassy of Qatar in Lebanon

Mr. Tariq Ben Ali Faraj al-Ansari
Ambassador
Director of the International Cooperation Department
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Sultan Ben Mubarak Khalifa Issa al-Kubaisi
Consultant
Embassy of Qatar in Lebanon

Mr. Khalid Ben Ali Issa Al Malki Al Jehani
First Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Mohammed Ben Yacoub Youssef Mohammed Al Madadi
Second Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Bajash Ben Abdullah Hammoud Hamad Alqahtani
Third Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Mohammed Ben Ahmad Jasem Ahmad Jaidah
Diplomatic Attaché
Ministry of foreign Affairs

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Walid al-Bukhaari
Chargé d'Affaires
Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Lebanon

Sudan

Mr. Osama Abdelwahab Mohammed Raies
Director General of the Africa City of Technology
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Mr. Ali Elsadek Ali
Ambassador of the Sudan in Lebanon

Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. Imad Abdul-Ghani Al Sabouni
Head of the Planning and International Cooperation Commission

Mr. Ali Abdelkarim Ali
Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic in Lebanon

Mr. Fadlala Salman Garz Aldeen
Deputy Head of the Planning and International Cooperation Commission

Mr. Nader Sheikh Ali
Director of Cooperation with International Organizations
Planning and International Cooperation Commission

Mr. Maher Ahmad Suleiman
Director of the Higher Institute for Applied Sciences and Technology

Tunisia

Mr. Taoufic Rajhi
Minister of Major Reforms

Mr. Mohamed Karim Boudali
Ambassador of Tunisia in Lebanon

Mr. Sami Bougacha
Director of Multilateral Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Imen Drissi
Delegate Minister
Embassy of Tunisia in Lebanon

United Arab Emirates

Mr. Hamad Saeed Al Shamsi
Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates in Lebanon

United Arab Emirates (*continued*)

Mr. Haytham Tabesh
Economic Researcher
Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Lebanon

Yemen

Mr. Mohamed Saeed al-Saadi
Minister of Planning and International Cooperation

Mr. Abdallah Abdulkarim Al Duaiss
Ambassador of Yemen in Lebanon

Mr. Mohammed Ahmed al-Hawri
Deputy Minister of Planning and International Cooperation

Mr. Salem Abdulqader Mohammed Bazara
Manager of the Minister's Office
Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation

B. States members of the United Nations not members of ESCWA

Algeria

Mr. Ahmad Bouziane
Ambassador of Algeria in Lebanon

C. United Nations Secretariat

Executive Office of the Secretary-General

Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild
Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination

Regional Commissions New York Office

Mr. Amr Nour
Director

Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon

Ms. Pernille Dahler Kardel
Acting Special Coordinator for Lebanon

D. United Nations programmes and agencies

United Nations Children's Fund

Mr. Ghassan Khalil
Senior Adviser
Middle East and North Africa Regional Office
Lebanon

United Nations Development Programme

Mr. Philippe Lazzarini
United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Lebanon

United Nations Population Fund

Mr. Karen Daduryan
Deputy Regional Director
Egypt

Ms. Asma Kurdahi
Programme Officer
Lebanon

United Nations Environment Programme

Mr. Sami Dimassi
Director and Regional Representative
Regional Office for West Asia
Bahrain

Mr. Abdelmenam Mohamed Hasan Mohamed
Regional Programme Officer, Science-Policy Interface
Bahrain

Ms. Etaf Chehade
Environment Consultant
Bahrain

Mr. Sherif Dawoud
Programme Management Officer
Bahrain

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Mr. Abdel Salam Sidahmed
Regional Representative
Lebanon

Mr. Mazen Shaqoura
Deputy Regional Representative

E. United Nations organizations and specialized agencies

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Mr. Maurice Saade
Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Lebanon

World Bank

Mr. Paul Welton
Lead Financial Management Specialist
Governance Global Practice, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Mr. Cristiano Pasini
Representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization
Lebanon

International Organization of Migration

Ms. Kristina Mejo
Deputy Regional Director
Regional Liaison and Policy Officer
Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa
Cairo, Egypt

Ms. Tala Al Khatib
Emergency Support Assistant

F. Intergovernmental and regional organizations and related bodies

League of Arab States

Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit
Secretary-General

Mr. Hossam Eddine Zaki
Assistant Secretary-General

Mr. Abdelrahman Solh
Assistant Secretary-General

Mr. Mahmoud Moustafa Mahmoud Afifi
Delegate Minister

Gulf Cooperation Council

Mr. Abdulmalik Ben Saleh Alashaikh
Head of the Economic Affairs Sector
Saudi Arabia

Council of Ministers of Labour and Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in the Gulf Cooperation Council

Mr. Amur Alhajry
Director-General
Executive Office

Mr. Saleh Alghadhouri
Director of the Department of Social Affairs
Executive Office

G. GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform (Lebanon)

Ms. Mona Zaroubi
Head of the Interoperability Team

Saudi Fund for Development

Mr. Abdallah Alrshoudi
Civil Engineer

Mr. Abdulrahman Alnughaimshi
Finance Researcher
Research and Economic Studies Department

Union of Arab Chambers

Ms. May Dimachkie
Director of Economic Research

Ms. Alya Nokkari
Economic Researcher

Economic Research Forum

Mr. Ibrahim Elbadawi
Managing Director

Centre for Arab Unity Studies

Ms. Luna Mufleh Abuswaireh
Director General

Arab Thought Foundation

Mr. Henri Awit
Director General

Mr. Ahmad Salim Farhat
Senior Researcher

Ms. Rafif Mohammed Nazir Rada
Senior Researcher

Arab Forum for Environment and Development

Mr. Najib Saab
Secretary-General

Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group

Mr. Raouf Said Abi Zaki
Executive Chairman
Mr. Assem Beayni
Senior Business Journalist

Mr. Iyad Youssef Dirany
Economic Journalist
Head of the Information and Communications Technology Department

Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization

Mr. Ali Ahmad Yamout
Compliance Coordinator

Likaa AlJoumhouria Association

Ms. Iman Ramez Abou Alwan
Member of the Committee of Information Environment and Social Activist

Beirut Institute

Ms. Raghida Dergham
Founder and Executive Chairman
United States of America

Human Environmental Association for Development

Ms. Marie-Thereze Seif
President

Arab Federation for Youth and Environment

Mr. Mamdouh Rashwan
Secretray-General

Al-Ahram Center For Political and Strategic Studies

Mr. Wahid Abdulmajeed
Manager

H. Experts

Mr. Abdallah Kamel Nassereddine
Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Business Administration and Associate Professor of Economics
Beirut Arab University

Ms. Karine Nasr Demerjian
Holy Spirit University of Kaslik

Mr. Imad Abdelmoneem Bachir
Director of the Faculty of Information
Lebanese University

Ms. Mariam Abdelaziz Mhanna
Consultant

Mr. Mohamed Abdelsalam
Academic Director
Future Center for Advanced Research and Studies
Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates

Mr. Omar Abdellah Dewachi
Former Regional Advisor
Assistant Professor and Director of the Conflict Medicine Program
American University of Beirut

I. Participants in round tables

Ms. Inaya Ezzeddine
Minister of State for Administrative Reform
Lebanon

Mr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh
Founder and Chairman of the Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization
Jordan

Mr. Adnan Ahmed Hasan Shihabeldin
Director General of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences
Kuwait

Mr. Moeen Hamzeh
Secretary-General of the National Council for Scientific Research
Lebanon

Mr. Nish Acharya
Former Director of Innovation and Entrepreneurship under former President of the United States of America, Mr. Barack Obama

Mr. Mohammed Gouda
Manager of the TechSpace Incubator at Nile University
Egypt

Mr. Elie Nasr
Founder of Foo
Lebanon

J. Round-table moderators

Ms. Gisele Khoury
Journalist
Lebanon

Mr. Said Ghorayeb
Journalist
Lebanon

Ms. Sabine Oueiss
Journalist and economic reporter
Lebanon

Annex II

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

Title	Item	Symbol
Provisional agenda and annotations	3	E/ESCWA/30/1
Organization of work	3	E/ESCWA/30/2
Consideration of requests by States Members of the United Nations and/or its specialized agencies that are not members of ESCWA to participate as observers in the thirtieth session of the Commission	4	E/ESCWA/30/3
Survey of economic and social developments in the Arab region 2017-2018	5	E/ESCWA/EDID/2018/1/Summary
Megatrends in the transport sector and their impact on the Arab region	6	E/ESCWA/30/4
Support for the Palestinian people: impact of the Israeli occupation and practices	7	E/ESCWA/30/5
Outcomes of the 2018 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development	8	E/ESCWA/30/6
Links between information and communications technology processes and sustainable development	9	E/ESCWA/30/7
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Reports of the Executive Committee	13	E/ESCWA/30/11
Reports of the Commission's subsidiary bodies	14	E/ESCWA/30/12
Programme performance in the biennium 2016-2017	15	E/ESCWA/30/13
Technical cooperation and regional advisory services	16	E/ESCWA/30/14
Financial status of the Commission	17	E/ESCWA/30/15
Proposed amendments to the strategic framework and programme of work for the biennium 2018-2019	18	E/ESCWA/30/16/Rev.1

Title	Item	Symbol
Technology for Sustainable Development: Creating Decent Jobs and Empowering Youth in Arab Countries	21	E/ESCWA/30/17
Technology for sustainable development in the Arab region: round tables	21	E/ESCWA/30/17/CRP.1
Information for participants		E/ESCWA/30/INF.1
List of documents		E/ESCWA/30/INF.2